

LPA DISTRICT 4 – NEWSCLIPS 1980-1985

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LITTLE PEOPLE OF AMERICA

DISTRICT 4

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'What's so bad about being little?'

Article by John Hicks
Photos by George Remaine

It's Saturday night at the Ta-Boo, an elegant canteen in Palm Beach where money talks so distinctly its spine-chilling crackle overpowers the rhythmic strains of the dance band.

Situated on Worth Avenue in the heart of Beautiful People Country, the Ta-Boo's social coordinates are often strikingly reaffirmed. Within moments this night, a mature gentleman presents a young woman with a \$5,000 trinket from the Gold Bar in the foyer, and the house photographer is called upon to immortalize a visiting baroness.

Commonplace as such extravagant stuff is in Beautiful People Country, almost nobody in the posh restaurant-lounge so much as arches an eyebrow.

But, suddenly, the Ta-Boo gang's eyebrows are fluttering like semaphore flags. Something very uncommon is happening in Palm Beach social life. A procession of dwarfs, moving on foot, on crutches and by wheelchair, wends among the tables and chairs of the affluent.

The crowd's collective consciousness gropes for an explanation: Oh yes! Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey is flashing its brass in nearby West Palm Beach. Therefore "they must be from the circus," says a voice from the luxurious gloom as the dwarfs, accompanied by friends and relatives of ordinary stature, make their way to reserved tables.

As if a sonar echo rebounding from a murky supposition, the assumption pings about the darkness. Though an inevitable conjecture — dwarfs, after all, are strongly identified with the circus — it is an erroneous one.

In reality, customers of the Ta-Boo are witnessing a social phenomenon, a portion of a convention staged by a tiny minority who refuse to be stereotyped as circus fixtures or shut off from life simply because they are different.

Ready or not, tonight, the Beautiful People of Palm Beach are meeting the Little People of America.

My parents did not treat me as something special," says Bobby Van Etten, reviewing childhood from his perch on a hospital waiting room chair. "I played games. In baseball, I pinch-hit for runners. I climbed trees to the top; I was always the lookout."

At 30, Van Etten remains a pinch hitter, a tree-climber and a lookout, but the games have been replaced by a cause

and his teammates are dwarfs and other unusually small people. Van Etten, chief organizer of this gathering of diminutive human beings, is intelligent, ambitious, energetic — and 3 feet 4 inches tall.

A tropical Friday afternoon is fading from the rarefied atmosphere of Florida's 24-karat Gold Coast as Van Etten reminisces. The Little People of America (LPA) regional get-together, which will reach its social apex 30 hours hence in the romantic haze of the Ta-Boo, gathers momentum in the inquiring brightness and antiseptic halls of Good Samaritan Hospital in West Palm Beach.

The LPA, founded 23 years ago, is described in publicity material as a 3,000-member "national organization devoted to helping 'little people' obtain their full potential in an average size world," a goal that has both physical and social implications. Consequently, a two-day medical clinic at Good Samaritan is essential to this convention that is "open to any person under 4 feet and 10 inches in height (persons with short stature or usually medically dwarfed) and their immediate family."

Answering the invitation are 22 short-

statured people and their kin. Representative of those attending are: Orlando residents Gladys Shipp, her son Mike, 29, and his daughter, Darby, 3, all dwarfs, and Mike's 5-foot-4 wife, Deborah; dwarf youngster Jennifer Arnold, 5, and her big people parents Dave and Judy Arnold, also of Orlando; and dwarf couple Ed and Pat Lang of Davie, Fla.

Medical experts also are on hand: orthopedists Dr. Steven Kopits of Baltimore's Johns Hopkins Hospital and Dr. Robert Bright of the University of Florida's Shands Teaching Hospital; Betty Elder, a Johns Hopkins little people counselor, herself mother of a dwarf child; and Diane Davis, a pediatric nurse practitioner who assists Kopits.

Dwarfism is simply defined by one medical reference work as "failure of growth during childhood." Most dwarfs are the products of mutated genes and are born to parents of normal height, while about 20 percent of dwarfs inherit their conditions. Numerous "forms and subforms" of these growth disorders occur, according to Kopits, who, in his examinations of more than 550 little people, has classified 33 types of dwarfism,



Accenting the positive: Ed Lang, LPA newsletter editor, responds to a circus performance.

from the "orthopedic point of view." Midgets, incidentally, are dwarfs with properly proportioned bodies.

Of the estimated 100,000 U.S. residents shorter than 4 feet, about 20,000 are dwarfs — one in every 10,000 people, a ratio applicable worldwide. The other 80,000 little people in the nation are small for reasons which, medical authorities say, can be traced to childhood factors ranging from malnutrition to emotional deprivation.

With the exception of some pituitary gland-related cases, which can be corrected by administering growth hormone and other medicines when the patient is a child, dwarfism is a permanent condition. "We cannot make children grow," Miss Davis says, "but we can correct and prevent disabling deformities."

Thus, those attending this clinic always will be little people, and they must, with the assistance of the medical community, surmount gigantic problems. Some of the difficulties they face become obvious as little people and little little people, as dwarf children are known, move about the waiting room, with its out-of-scale chairs and desks.

Imagine, for purposes of comparison, that you are a 3-year-old child living in an adult-sized world. When you sit on a chair, your feet don't touch the floor. Climbing onto your parents' bed is a test of acrobatic skill. Ascending a flight of steps is grueling work. The family car is a mechanical monster that you can only pretend to drive. Keeping up with the big kids at sports or play is difficult or impossible.

But, if your development is normal, your feelings of frustration constantly are assuaged by ever-higher pencil marks on the door frame and parental reassurances that someday you will grow up and be capable of handling grown-up tasks and privileges with ease.

Now, imagine that you were born a dwarf, that you have struggled with the compound problems of being a "little little person" in a giant world and that, finally, you have "grown up" into adulthood. You now have the hopes, aspirations and needs of an adult human being and the height of that normal-sized 3-year-old.

Furthermore, you never will be any taller, and your condition is compounded by crippling skeletal imperfections and other physical and emotional problems. Many prospective employers will not hire you, not only because you are small but because, they say, it creates problems with their insurance companies. Imagine, if you can, the handicap these impediments place on your life, your livelihood and your social outlook.

Finally, imagine the tremendous adjustments that you must make to establish a niche in that outsized society around you, to earn a living, and to survive physically and mentally. As the clothing you wear must be tailored to your small frame, so must your life be tailored to your circumstances.

To a person not struggling against such obstacles, overcoming them might seem impossible, and, yet, they can be surmounted. Consider Van Etten, a Jupiter, Fla., resident who is assistant director of LPA District 4, which includes Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. He has leadership and public relations polish in his voice and purpose in the level gaze behind his dark-rimmed glasses; he radiates perseverance. But he did not acquire these traits overnight or without trying.



Learning the game of life: Little little people Jennifer Arnold, 5; Wayne Murray, 12; and Amy Collard, 12, hone their skills with a computer toy at Good Samaritan Hospital in West Palm Beach.

Reaching toward normalcy: Dave and Judy Arnold escort their dwarf daughter Jennifer along a hallway at Good Samaritan Hospital. Jennifer, 5, is 30 inches tall and weighs 23 pounds.



A special touch: A medical technician positions Jennifer Arnold for an X-ray, part of an examination to determine the Orlando child's growth progress.

When Van Etten was a child, he says, his parents challenged any concern he expressed about his size by replying, "What's so bad about being little?" and they urged him to make the best of his circumstances. It was realistic counseling that Van Etten took to heart. Adding needs to words, the Van Ettens took their son into public, despite stares and comments, and, to the extent possible, raised him as if he had no handicap.

In a telephone conversation from her home in Jupiter, Van Etten's mother, Irene, stresses the importance of her son's early upbringing, both to his own acceptance of dwarfism and to the development of his indomitable character. Summing up, she repeats words he once said to her: "It didn't bother you, so it didn't bother me."

Still, life with a dwarf child was quite traumatic in the beginning, Mrs. Van Etten says. Rendering the situation even more baffling and trying, Van Etten was born into a family where tallness is the norm. His father, now dead, was 6 feet 3; his three brothers are all more than 6 feet tall; his sister and mother are both 5 feet

"I felt terrible when this happened," Mrs. Van Etten says. "I went to the priest, and he said, 'God has given you this spe-

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Seeking reassurance: Parental understanding and love are important ingredients in a dwarf child's successful adaptation to a tall, tall world.

little

(From preceding page)

cial child for a reason." Those words of comfort became a creed for Van Etten's family who ensured that Bobby would prevail by providing him with aid and encouragement as he pressed beyond the limits of his disability.

Van Etten began life in a brace that extended from his neck to his feet. He didn't walk until he was 7 and then had to use crutches while wearing braces from waist to feet. Often expected to die, he kept outliving the predictions. Consequently, he developed a gutsy attitude that parallels the philosophy of the LPA, which he joined three years ago after attending one of its clinics. This year, he is running for the presidency of the national organization.

The family support that has helped sustain Van Etten continues and is evident at the convention. His sister, Mrs. Paula Buerkle, who, with husband Tom, operates a tennis and swim club at Lake Worth, near West Palm Beach, assists Van Etten with paperwork and details. Clinic expenses are being met through a fund-raising tournament held at the Buerkles' club. But, while family support still is important to him, Van Etten is developing as his own individual, a "fireball," another LPA official calls him, a decision-maker, an activist.

Little People of America has played a major part in Van Etten's expanding life, notably in introducing him to vital physical therapy. Until he attended his first LPA clinic, his condition had not even been correctly diagnosed. During his examination of Van Etten, Dr. Kopits discovered that Van Etten's dwarfism, rather than having been caused by congenital rubella as previously believed, resulted from a rare — and almost unpronounceable — condition known as spondylo-epiphyseal dysplasia congenita, or SED.

Basically, SED is a genetic type of short-trunk dwarfism, characterized by a large, prominent abdomen, exaggerated low swayback and deformities of the hip muscles, with a tendency for the hips to dislocate as a child grows. In some individuals, SED also can involve serious disorders of neck vertebrae.

As a consequence of the new diagnosis of Van Etten's condition, proper medical treatment, including repeated, complex leg surgery, has enabled him to progress still further in leading a useful life

and in helping other little people fit into the world.

Socially, he also has made up for a delayed start. "I never dated in high school; I had no transportation. Things changed in college." He smiles. "I really bloomed." Dates since have included both little women and women of ordinary stature. At the moment, he has a special, though rather long distance, interest in 23-year-old Alice Higgins of New York, a little person he met while both were being treated at Johns Hopkins.

Van Etten's academic credits include a bachelor of science degree from Orlando's University of Central Florida (where he was a coxswain for the women's rowing team) and a master's degree in electrical engineering, with a specialty in biomedical engineering, earned at the University of Florida.

A campus figure well-remembered by other UF graduates, Van Etten frequently was seen driving a hand control-equipped 1969 Cougar — still his principal means of transportation — or zipping to classes on an electrically powered miniature bicycle complete with bright orange safety pennant. He chuckles as he recalls the hazards of riding the bike, custom-made by another engineering student and capable of silently hitting speeds of up to 18 mph. Acknowledging a few mishaps, he says, "People couldn't hear me until I was right on top of them."

His most pressing need these days is one familiar to new grads: "I'm looking for a job." He lives at home and, as a handicapped person, depends upon his late father's Social Security benefits for support. The occupation he is seeking could include the fitting and maintenance of prosthetic devices, or the design of artificial parts for the human body. He anticipates working in either a hospital or a research center. While awaiting a money-making job, he is drafting designs for auto safety equipment tailored to the special needs of little people.

Although he acknowledges that his size might pose some difficulty in finding that crucial occupation, his strength of purpose is larger than life. "I just have to get that first foot in the door." It is an especially appropriate choice of words for Van Etten whose feet, before they were properly aligned through surgery, were turned to the sides.

Thus, Van Etten's view from 3 feet 4 is a lofty one, and dwarfism is a handicap only if allowed to be. "You can make it a negative or a positive thing," he says, leaving no doubt which it is for Bobby Van Etten.

On dwarf-size crutches, Van Etten moves confidently about the waiting room to pump energy into a convention which has attracted little people from throughout Florida. They have come to Good Samaritan Hospital for physical examinations, for consultations and for something more. Something reflected in a glance or sensed in a word, some infusion of spirit and hope that arcs from examining fingertips, something that leaps the gap between negative and positive.

Dr. Kopits, for many little people, is the all-important intermediary in their adaptation to mainstream life. The 43-year-old orthopedic surgeon specializes in treating the complicated, often agoniz-

ing physical problems of the small in stature, and some of them wait late into the evening to see him. Their waiting, unlike the ordeal often associated with a doctor's outer office, seems almost an act of faith.

In a hospital symbolically named for selfless humanitarianism, Kopits, whose father and grandfather were both orthopedists, offers his heart and skills to those often bypassed by their fellow man. But to the little people, the big, dark-haired man with the intense, compassionate expression is far more than a Good Samaritan; he is a saint who works miracles, makes people walk, gives new life to those who might otherwise waste away in dark places. Kopits was the one who performed the several exacting operations that freed Bobby Van Etten's twisted legs.

Though such fine and intricate work might seem possible only at the hands of an extremely somber individual, Kopits is warm and outgoing, generous with his feelings as well as his surgical abilities. In the pleasant, expressive face that gazes down on little patients is a wealth of humor and European charm that wins the confidence of frightened children and eases away adult anxieties.

Kopits' skill at rebuilding malformed and misaligned bones gathers the respect of peer and patient alike. One of those applauding his expertise is Dr. Bright, chief of pediatric orthopedics at the University of Florida teaching hospital. Bright, whose patients have included Van Etten, is attending his first LPA convention. In the clinic, he has worked side by side with Kopits to examine patients, interpret their X-rays and discuss their problems. During convention social activities, Bright pauses to pronounce Kopits "probably the greatest orthopedic authority on dwarfism."

Bright also observes that Van Etten is an inspiration to other dwarfs, particularly children, because "they see Bobby, who has a master's degree and who has gone on to make something of himself." Thus, the Kopits-Van Etten partnership, molded in the operating room, helps liberate human potential that, radiating outward, inspires potential in other people.

Throughout Friday and Saturday, Kopits devotes every available minute to the small humans gathered in West Palm Beach — then flies to Denver to attend a young patient whose surgically repaired



Accomplishment rewarded: Dr. Charles N. Millican, then-president of UCF, presents a bachelor of science degree to 3-foot-4 Bobby Van Etten. University of Central Florida photo.



Belonging: Bobby Van Etten, refusing to let dwarfism be a handicap, served as a coxswain for the women's rowing team while attending college. University of Central Florida photo.

body has slipped out of position in a special cast. This lengthy sidetrip poses no inconvenience to Kopits, who once traveled to South America for a similar purpose.

Not until several days later, after Kopits has returned to Baltimore and to his demanding schedule of research and surgery, is there time for him to discuss his work, via telephone, from his home. Though it might seem that the time-consuming occupation of being a healer and "father" to his patients would preclude a family life, Kopits shares his crowded schedule with wife Edina and children, Helen, 20; Steven, 18; and Les, 15. But, even at home, the doctor is working, probing more and more deeply into the mysteries of his specialty.

His voice is modest, far softer than long distance. Speaking in faintly accented echoes of his Budapest birthplace, he says, "I'm no saint; I'm just a person dedicated to an ideal," and praises his Johns Hopkins colleagues whom he describes as "extremely talented and gifted individuals."

The father of the Johns Hopkins dwarfism program, Kopits says, is Dr. Victor McKusick, a geneticist who is professor of medicine and physician in chief at the hospital. McKusick, head of the division of medical genetics until four years ago, invited dwarfs to Johns Hopkins to participate in research programs and to receive treatment in the mid-1960s. He also convened a major meeting of little people in 1969, as Kopits was refocusing his career. "My work is an offshoot of his," Kopits says of McKusick. "I owe my orientation in medicine to his interest in dwarfism."

Their continuing dedication to this field has led to a series of annual symposiums on medical treatment of little people, the eighth of which is scheduled for June 27-28 at Johns Hopkins. That and the annual LPA National Convention, which is held in various locations about the country from year to year, are major events on the little people calendar. "Convention '80," scheduled in Los Angeles for July 21-25, is expected to attract 750 delegates for conferences on medical and social concerns and on LPA business matters.

Medical personnel of Johns Hopkins Hospital have "surgically treated" more than 200 little people in about 750 operations, says Kopits, noting that the suc-

cess rate has been remarkable. Even when surgical team members were just learning their techniques, 98 percent of procedures worked. In about 15 percent of cases, doctors must operate more than once to achieve a single desired correction, and some young patients must undergo numerous operations to remedy problems that occur as their bodies develop. One 6-year-old has undergone 15 operations since the age of 6 months.

Obviously, surgically reconstructing human beings is a time-consuming process. Repairing some deformities has required a total of 70 operating hours per patient over a period of three or more years. One hip operation alone required 13 hours. Despite the delicate nature of such marathon surgery, only one person has died during an operation, a death caused by an anesthesia complication, Kopits says. Another person died some time after surgery. In that case, the individual's condition dictated that he remain in a normal atmosphere, and he succumbed to lack of oxygen after traveling into a mountainous area.

While surgery can set a little person on the road to productive life, it often is only part of a dwarf patient's prescription. An equally important task can be doctoring his self-respect.

Little people must wrestle with "the psychological impact of being so different," Kopits says. To maintain good mental health, a little person first must accept the condition of dwarfism. He then must be accepted, both by the "small community" within the home and by the larger community outside. And it is vital to development of a healthful self-view that he win acceptance during the teen years, when dating and other social rituals are of heartfelt importance to all young people.

The orthopedist's comments make it clear that straightening malformed bones is only one aspect of his practice. Enlightening people is another. "I don't think the general public knows much about dwarfs," he says. "Only a small portion of the public knows: 'They are like I am. They are intelligent and they even hold jobs.'"

Kopits is a lodestar, guiding those who need help, those who want to help. One of the helpers he has attracted is Diane Davis, 29, who coordinates little people in-patient care in the Department of Pediatric Orthopedics at Johns Hopkins Hospital. A registered nurse with special training in children's health and development, she does everything from briefing patients on surgical procedures to arranging their transportation home.

Miss Davis' special occupation wasn't just handed to her. "I created my job with the help of Dr. Kopits and a \$10,000 donation from a patient's family," she says. The contribution supported her for a year while she was in training. That was three years ago. She now is an affiliate staff member of the Johns Hopkins University Department of Orthopedics and is, to her knowledge, the only person in the country who performs her particular kind of work. So extensive is her understanding of nursing care for little people that she is contributing a chapter on the topic to a book being written by Kopits. The book, she says, concerns aspects of orthopedic medicine related to dwarfism.

"The patients and their families really love him and have a lot of respect and admiration and confidence in him," Miss Davis says, noting that Kopits' life goal is to "make his contribution to this group

of patients." Consequently, "it is important that that book come out." Little people to whom Kopits has ministered are so devoted to their doctor that, when they learned he needed money for research related to the book, they donated \$27,000 to help underwrite the project. "And," Miss Davis says, "these patients are not rich."

This mutual love and concern began in 1968 when a little little person, completely paralyzed, was brought to the Johns Hopkins Hospital emergency room while Kopits was on duty. During his treatment of the child, Kopits found that the paralysis was caused when a blow to the face aggravated an abnormality of the cervical spine — the portion of the spine in the neck.

As he investigated further, Kopits realized that the abnormality was peculiar to the boy's form of dwarfism — and previously unknown to medicine. The discovery "opened up a whole new world," in Miss Davis' words, both for the physician and for many suffering little people. Among those who have benefited are the paralyzed youngster who, through treatment, regained partial use of his limbs. Two years ago, Kopits made a signal commitment to his patients when he resigned as chief of pediatric orthopedics at Johns Hopkins to devote his career to treating the problems of the short-statured.

In a society often preoccupied with physical beauty, and with height as part of that beauty, 6-foot-1 Kopits provides a noteworthy study in values. "... When the brains begin to work in communicating," he says, "you sort of lose sight of the height."

Kopits does not feel alone in this regard. This is an "era of enlightenment" in America, and acceptance of little people "has never been as good in any society as it has in this," he says. "The reaction is great. The American people, being a generous people, tend to accept the conditions of different people."

Other eras, other societies have been less kind. Kopits speaks of cases in which parents have hidden dwarf children during the daylight hours, taken them out for walks in the dark of night and, in general, considered them "a punishment of God... for past, usually sexual, sins."

He tells a true horror story: "A dwarf in another country developed the idea she was dead and everything around her was dead. As a child in the village, she was persecuted in a very cruel way. She still walks the streets of the village. She claims she is dead... At one time she was a schoolteacher. She played dead until she believed it."

To great extent, concepts of dwarfs have been shaped by tradition, fiction and folklore. In mythology, Kopits points out, dwarfs "were mining the gold of the gods in the depths of the mountains." Historically, dwarfs were jesters and good luck charms — and, sometimes honored members — in the courts of long-ago rulers. In entertainment, they are popularly known as circus performers or as characters in a Walt Disney film.

Kopits knows the real-life side of these caricatures and stereotypes. Dwarfs compensate for their smallness "in many ways," he says. "They are hardworking; they have an iron will. It's incredible how several people I know, living alone in apartments, go to work, do a good job, come home and have no more strength for anything else. They are proud of the fact they live an independent life, per-

haps in pain all the time, but they hang on to their independence. They ask to be treated as normal people."

Reaching toward physical normalcy can be costly. Johns Hopkins Hospital recently provided a potential patient with a \$22,000 estimate for two knee operations, including surgical charges, operating room and anesthesiology costs and daily hospital care for 16 to 20 days. Surgical fees alone for the six operations required to repair some dwarfs' legs presently might be as much as \$20,000.

In some cases, medical insurance helps patients to meet the costs, but even those who have no means of paying have not been turned away. Some expenses can be absorbed by the hospital and the affiliated Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and other costs can be paid through funds provided by private and government grants. Little people also volunteer for grant-funded medical studies in order to obtain needed treatment, says Lou Scharrer of Orlando, president of the Central Florida Mini-Gators, an LPA chapter.

"I have something unique to give to my fellow human beings, and if they can't pay, they can't," Kopits says. "Since we (Johns Hopkins physicians) perform this (surgery) on a regular and routine basis, since we are the only ones, we can't take money into consideration. We just have to take our losses... It's appreciated we are not talking about the money-hungry physician as he is portrayed so often. We are talking about something of the old type of concerned people... There is a certain degree of responsibility to do things that comes with the ability to do something out of the ordinary."

Yet, his work does have rich rewards. Kopits' big payoff, far more valuable to

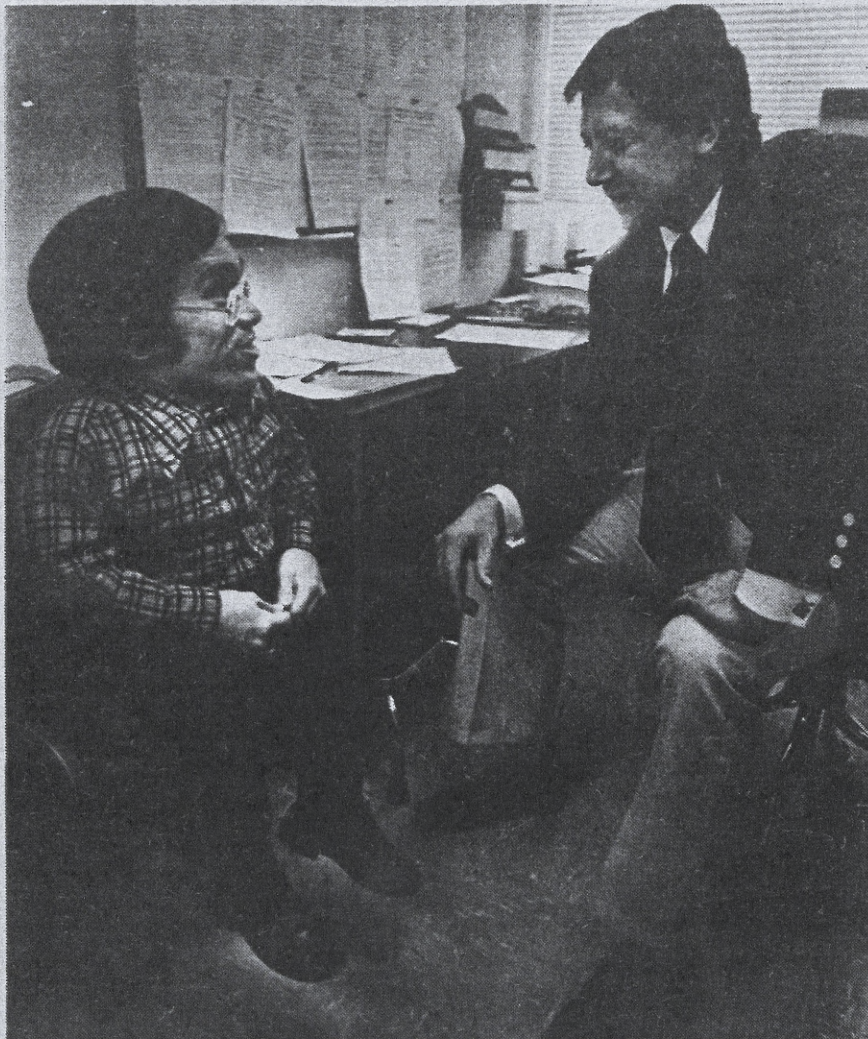
him than the gold of the gods, is "to see an individual — extremely weak, barely dragging, who cannot stand or just take a few steps — who, two or three years later, after multiple operations, can walk with better body image, take pride in his appearance and do things he couldn't do before."

These are the rewards who walk upright and steady, the precious rewards who run and play and laugh in a hospital clinic where little people wait long hours, patiently and with hope.

Jennifer Arnold, 5-year-old golden girl, is one of those rewards for Kopits' extraordinary skills. The surgeon, Dave and Judy Arnold say, has helped their daughter attain two great goals in life: reaching the doorknob and being able to run as fast as other kids. Such achievements are products of a relationship between Jennifer and her physician that is special in more than one regard. "She tells him she loves him," Mrs. Arnold says, "and he says he loves her." This prize patient, 30 inches tall, weighing 23 pounds, shows no sign of apprehension as she awaits her appointment with Kopits. Their meeting yields another, far more monumental milestone in her life when the doctor informs the elated parents that Jennifer has a "long-limbed" form of SED that should allow her to grow to more than 4 feet tall.

That's glorious news for Jennifer who, in her beginning life, already has faced three major operations: one in which neck vertebrae were fused to prevent pinching of a nerve — an anomaly that could lead to paralysis or death — and two procedures to correct a bone deficiency

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Confidence and commitment: The important patient-healer relationship that exists between Bobby Van Etten and Dr. Steven Kopits was molded during complex operations.

little

(From preceding page)

that causes the legs to come out of the hip sockets. A fourth operation to correct a soft bone condition in her ankles might have to be performed later, but, for now, the important thing is that Jennifer is growing.

This prognosis is especially noteworthy because of the spiritual boost it can give to a youngster who has begun to examine her world with a child's clear-eyed perception. "We've always been honest with her," Arnold says. "She's beginning to grasp that she's smaller than other children." Consequently, mother and father are "concerned with her adaptation," and that and Jennifer's checkup are the reasons they have come to the LPA convention.

Socially, the convention already is a hit with Jennifer who, bright and winsome in ruffles and patent leather shoes, has befriended several little people playmates. At home, the scene is similar, but the friends are larger.

"At this age," Arnold says, "kids adore her. She's like a doll to them. Not a day goes by when there aren't a dozen kids in our yard." But the Arnolds do not know what to expect later when the differences between Jennifer and big people become more pronounced. "This is our first experience (with the LPA)," Mrs. Arnold says. "We hope it'll help her, and us."

Jennifer's adaptation likely will be aided by people such as Betty Elder, who works in Moore Clinic in the Johns Hopkins Division of Medical Genetics. Mrs. Elder provides medical and social counseling for little people and their families,



Small, proud, independent: Skill at income tax preparation guarantees a livelihood for Gladys Shipp of Orlando who maintains this business office in her home. Photo by Andrew J. Hickman.

and arranges patients' appointments with the appropriate specialists. She has more than just a professional stake in the concerns of little people. Her job with Moore Clinic began only three years ago, but her understanding of the patients goes back more than 12 years to the birth of her son Charles.

Charles has a form of dwarfism known as achondroplasia, a far more "typical type" than the SED that affects Bobby Van Etten and Jennifer Arnold. Achondroplasia is a long-trunk, short-limbed dwarfism characterized by considerable joint looseness, large head size, spinal

deformities and, in about half the cases, bowed legs.

When Charles was born to Mrs. Elder and her 6-foot-plus husband, "we were distressed," she says. "We had no idea why this had occurred. I thought maybe it was the medicines I had taken during pregnancy, but, according to all medical information, he is a mutation." Relieved of the uneasy feeling that Charles' dwarfism might have been caused by human error, the Elders accepted his condition and the ongoing challenge it presents. Afflicted with health problems from birth, 3-foot-3 Charles has bowed legs and one defective eye, and is scheduled for surgery later this year to help correct these disorders.

"Now that he is in the sixth grade, he knows there is a great difference between him and other children. He has a lot of concerns and questions," Mrs. Elder says. She notes also that, while she and her husband are lending Charles the support he requires, they must take care not to neglect average-sized daughter Frances, 14, who has concerns and questions of her own.

Having a dwarf child "did very much alter our life," Mrs. Elder acknowledges, but, as she tells it, the experience has been anything but negative. The Elders have discovered "far more positive aspects" to a family situation that has been "cemented" and made "more caring" by Charles' presence in their lives. "We have done more stimulating things together," Mrs. Elder says.

Not all parents, doubly burdened with the feeling that they have failed and with the responsibility of raising a handicapped youngster, can manage so well. "I have encountered people who couldn't cope, who wanted to put the child up for adoption," Mrs. Elder says. As a counselor, she does not discourage this, feeling that the child is better off in a home

where he is wanted and loved. There is no problem in finding adoptive parents for dwarf children, she says. The LPA operates a foundation that places the children with little people parents, and little people also can be adopted by big people through other agencies.

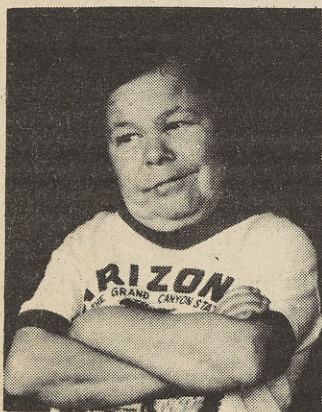
Giving away the child, though, is no guarantee that the parents' emotional distress will ease, Mrs. Elder says. "I am sure there are times when people who put a child out wonder what happened to that special child they let go."

The Elders' special child has joined Boy Scouts and "seems to be well liked" by fellow troop members, his mother says. It's a part of being accepted on equal terms. Like other little people, Charles resists being patronized or treated as a curiosity. His normal-statured cousin recently married a little person, and Charles and Mrs. Elder were among 500 guests at the reception. At one point in the proceedings, Charles unhappily informed his mother, "If another person pats me on the head, I'll bite him."

Mrs. Elder could appreciate Charles' sentiments. "I said, 'Fine! If they're going to treat you like a dog, you can bite them.'"

Helping little people and their families to come to terms with society is only part of Betty Elder's job; she and other concerned people also strive to alter society's attitudes toward little people. That doesn't mean that the unusually small need to be coddled. "Parents," she says, "are educating the school systems not to overindulge their children."

Well-meaning agencies eager to lavish charity on dwarfs also are headed off by those familiar with little people's pride. "One of the things we have established," Dr. Kopits says, "is, for heaven's sake, don't give disability to people just because they are dwarfs, because they are



Michu: "The smallest man in the world."

Of reality and illusion

LPA conventioners are not the only little people in town on this weekend. The Greatest Show on Earth is exploding in all its star-spangled splendor at the West Palm Beach Civic Auditorium, and that provides the stage for a curious Saturday afternoon interlude in the convention schedule.

Show biz, thriving on alliterative superlative, has bombarded the world with some of the most electrifying images of little people — from P.T. Barnum's 19th

century Tom Thumb to the present-day Michu, born Milhaly Mezaros of Hungary, "the smallest man in the world," 40 years old, standing 33 inches tall, weighing 25 pounds.

The fortuitous proximity of the LPA and Michu seems a public relations dream come true. It becomes inevitable, through the urging of the LPA, that the twain will meet. Consequently, Michu finds himself preparing to greet his fellow little people outside the civic auditorium as they arrive to watch a performance.

Michu, the "diminutive dynamo," as he is billed, is a riveting though somewhat taciturn sight as he waits, amid the powerful perfume of hay and beasts, for the Little People of America. Tiny arms crossed, small shoe tapping on the concrete, he speaks only when spoken to, while maintaining a rather wry expression.

Now, the LPA members appear and slowly approach the great man who positions doll-like hands at minuscule waist and confronts his visitors. Little people who are pushed to the front scrutinize the well-proportioned performer as if he were from another planet. Michu seems equally uncertain about them. He shakes the hands of reluctant children and eager adults, says a few things in his small, accented voice — "How old are you? You are watching the show?" — and fields some nervously asked questions.

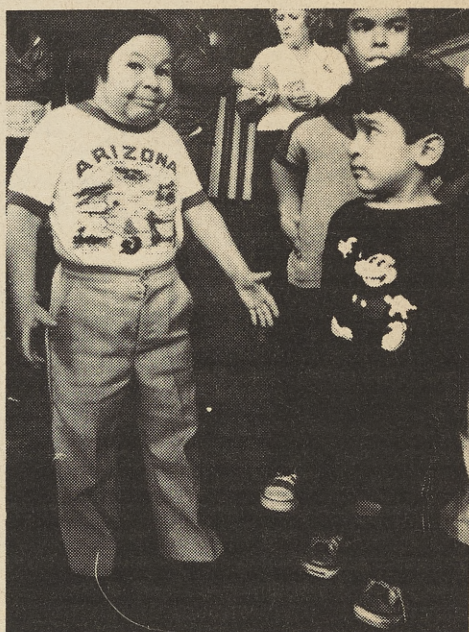
Bobby Van Etten steps to the fore. He is the height of the late, great Tom Thumb — 7 giant inches taller than Michu — rendering the circus luminary's lilliputian dimensions even more mind-boggling. Leaning on his crutches and summoning all his powers of persuasion, Van Etten engages Michu in brief conversation, learns that the mini-showman is Hungarian, and attempts to entice him to the banquet that night, using the lure of Hungarian-born Dr. Kopits.

"No time, no time," replies Michu, giving a negative wave of the hand. Then, with a few parting nods and smiles, he marches through an auditorium door back into the world of razzle-dazzle. For the LPA group, it has been an apprehensive and disappointing encounter. Van Etten, noting the uneasiness, says, "The first time you meet another little person, that is very much the impact." Characteristically, he accentuates the positive, commenting that, at least, the little people "had the chance to meet the smallest person performing."

A short time later, inside the auditorium, they see Michu in action, beaming a huge smile as he circles the arena on elephant back. He is in his sphere now, one he has known since childhood when he followed his dwarf parents into the world of entertainment. LPA members do not speak ill of little people performers, knowing that, for many dwarfs, the imaginary realm created by theater or the circus has been their only means of cop-

ing with the real world. Yet, the LPA members' lives are distant from this ring where unusual smallness evokes applause rather than stunned silence or uneasiness.

It has been a revealing interlude. Little people, it seems, are like big people: Sometimes, no matter how hard they stretch, they just can't reach.



Communications gap: An awkward moment for Michu, Wayne Murray and 6-year-old Brian Campanella.



Unity: Overcoming the problems of little people has strengthened this Orlando family, which includes three generations of dwarfs. Joined for this portrait are Mike Shipp, daughter Darby, wife Deborah, daughter Melissa and Mike's mother Gladys.

le. They say, 'Don't give us money to re. Accept us. Let us work.' . . . They don't want giveaways, because they are entitled."

Dwarfs in the United States hold a variety of jobs. One little person is vice president of an electronics company. A number are disc jockeys, and many are employed by government agencies. Ed earns his living as a newspaper editor, and uses his professional skills to edit newsletters of both the national LPA and his home chapter, the South Florida Mini-Gators. (His wife, Pat, is chapter president.) Mike Shipp is an enterprising businessman who sells ceiling and attic fans, roof ventilators and vacuum cleaners.

"There are," Mrs. Elder says, "short stature people who can do anything."

Mike Shipp certainly looks and sounds as if he can do anything. Confident, outspoken, he confronts his size head-on, like the proud ol' Georgia boy he is. "I've raced motorcycles scuba-dived; I got into fights and I my butt whipped," he recounts Saturday night, during a lull in the conversation. But he doesn't give up, this 4-foot-4 macho man with thick, collar-length hair, fashionably drooping mustache and penetrating vision. Not after

being whipped, not after two major spinal operations that have caused him to lose two inches in height. Shipp insists on being accepted for his skills and human potential, and he endeavors to turn dwarfism from a handicap into an asset, figuring that, long after other salesmen have been forgotten, "they'll remember me."

Darby Shipp, 31 inches and 24 pounds of restless 3-year-old, clambers over her parents' knees, from lap to lap and back again. "Tadpole," as her father calls her, has had three ear operations and soon will undergo leg surgery. But there is no sorrow or anxiety in her laughing face. She leaps and dances like a flame, a spark of humanity too bright to extinguish or be hidden. Her father will see to that. "I'm not ashamed of being a dwarf. We're going to try to teach Darby that."

Shipp, a 10-year member of LPA, becomes angered if anyone attaches shame to being a dwarf or having a dwarf youngster. Wife Deborah, 28, recalls a symposium on little people's problems during which Shipp bluntly informed the father of a dwarf child that the parent, and not the youngster, was having a "problem" accepting the condition of dwarfism.

The Shipp family has learned to accept a great deal in their search for understanding. Though the sight of a 4-foot-4 man walking alongside a 5-foot-4 woman might startle some passersby, Shipp and his wife hardly notice their size differ-

ence. (There is some precedent in the Shipp family for this uncommon pairing: Mike's mother is 4 feet 1, his father, 6 feet 1.) Although Mike, introduced to Deborah by mutual friends, was the first dwarf she ever had met, she noticed his appealing personality rather than his shortness.

"Everybody I knew liked Mike as well as I did," says Deborah, a pleasant, attractive blonde. "It (his stature) didn't seem to bother anybody, and it didn't bother me." First as a friend and, then, as a boyfriend, whatever his height, "Mike was a big influence on me . . . I never really thought of him as being small."

"My wife really understands me," says Shipp, who dated Deborah for nearly two years before they married. "My wife is the biggest influence on us all. She's the one who keeps us going."

"Us" includes Melissa, Deborah's 9-year-old daughter by a previous marriage. An average-sized child, Melissa has encountered some "problems with children teasing her about having a small father and a tall mother," Shipp says, not bitterly, but not lightly. Perhaps it's the sort of thing expected of kids. But it also seems clear that Shipp never wants to hear similar comments from adults.

Shipp's mother, a 49-year-old divorcee who takes pride in making her own way in the big world, sounds every bit as tenacious as her son. At Good Samaritan Hospital, where she uses a metal walker to help her move about the waiting

room, Gladys Shipp talks about self-reliance. "I was brought up in the country in a small town. When I realized I was going to be like this, I realized I was going to have to make my living with my brains and hands."

Consequently, she applied her mind to the intricacies of income tax. "I've done taxes since 1956. I owned my own accounting and tax business in Georgia." A grocery store owner for a time after arriving in Florida, she now works for a tax preparation firm in Orlando.

She has undergone three operations to relieve pressure on her spinal cord — surgery that has cost her 3½ inches in height — and electrodes from a small electronic "stimulator" have been implanted in her skin to help deaden leg pains. Mrs. Shipp is scheduled to go to Johns Hopkins later this year for implantation of a second stimulator, a device similar to a pacemaker. Despite everything, she considers herself fortunate. "I look around," she says, "and I always see people in worse condition."

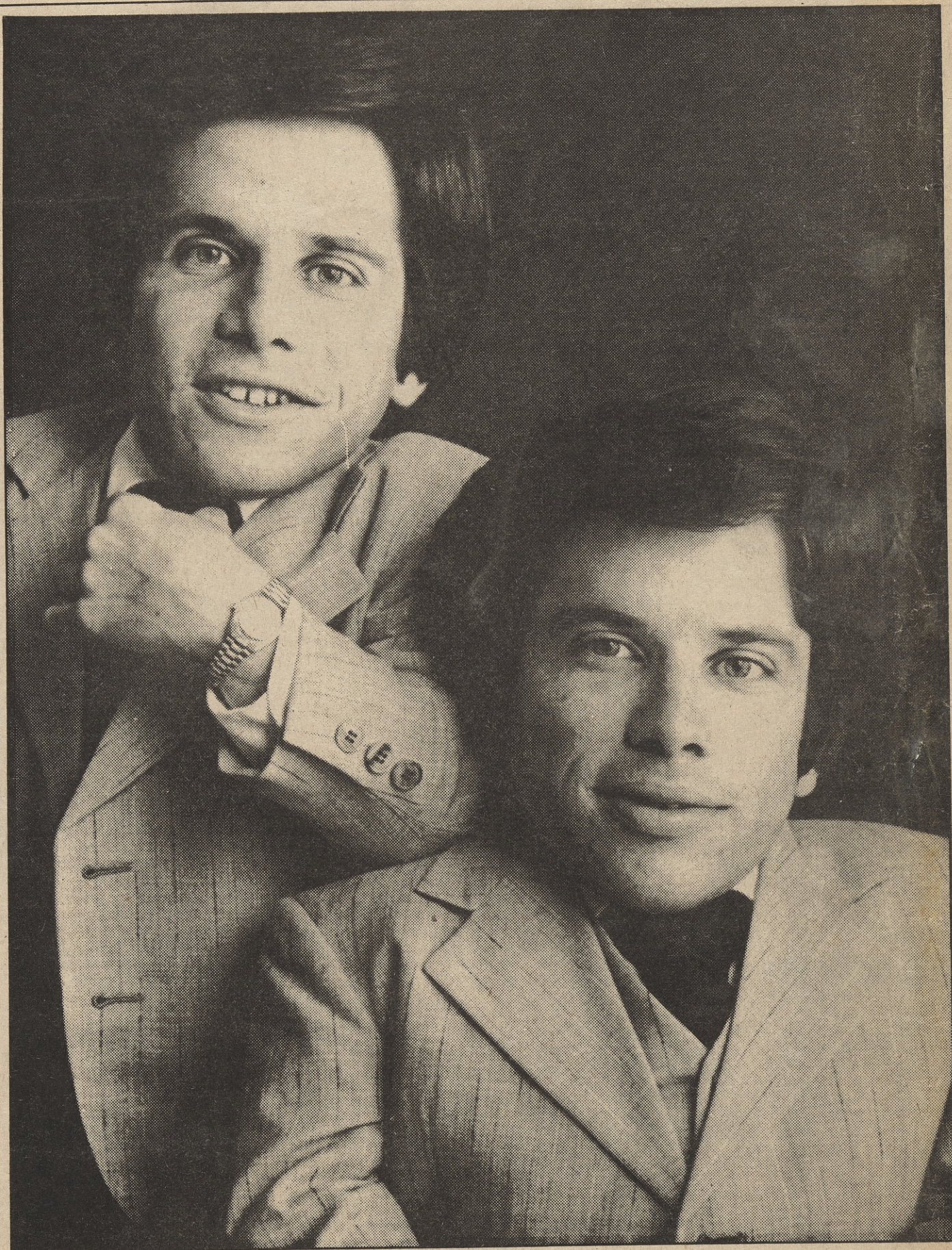
It is an attitude already working in the lives of her son and granddaughter. Mike sums up the philosophy tersely, straightforwardly: "You cannot sit back and drown in your own pity."

Saturday night reaches toward Sunday morning at the Ta-Boo. Bobby Van Etten has set aside his crutches and is happily testing Steven Kopits' handiwork by gliding sedately about the dance floor with little person Linda Shuster from Fort Lauderdale. As they sway to the music against a backdrop of big people, Van Etten's smile reveals pure joy that, at long last, he can do what everyone else out there seems to regard as a God-given right.

At shoved-together tables nearby, little people and their big friends sip drinks and socialize in the glow from overhead lights shaped like bunches of grapes. Serious talk, light talk, laughter blend into the routine Saturday night buzz. If anyone at this chic watering hole still is startled by the presence of dwarfs, he isn't discussing it very loudly. There no longer seems any division between the beautiful people and the little people.

But in the midst of this conviviality, a torment is working in Mike Shipp, the realist, the guy who says what he thinks. He puts down his drink and leans forward; his legs, too short to reach the floor, dangle unseen beneath the table. He seems as big as any man, bigger. He stares out through eyes filled with sadness and anger, and there is an edge to his voice when he speaks.

"I saw a movie one time," he says. "It was one of those old Hercules movies. In this movie, they opened up a dungeon, and there was nothin' in there but dwarfs." Powerful emotions flit across his face. "They had put all the dwarfs in the dungeon," he says with repugnance. "I'll never forget that."



Twin brothers Greg and John Rice begin TV career.

'Real People' show launches television career for twins

By STACY SMITH

HOLLYWOOD (GNS) — "If we can do it — anyone can."

So say Greg and John Rice, co-stars of NBC's upcoming "Foul Play" series. And they certainly have the life story to back up their claim.

The 28-year-old identical twins are each 3 feet tall and were abandoned by their natural parents at birth.

They can't remember their foster father ever earning more than \$60 a week.

Their foster mother died of cancer when they were in eighth grade, and their foster father died a few years later.

"Life really dealt us a losing hand," says John. "Greg and I had a lot of reasons we could have used to justify never doing anything. But we thought, like the saying goes, that if life had given us lemons — we'd make lemonade."

Viewers of "Real People" who caught the 1979 segment featuring the Rice twins aren't likely to have forgotten how the two turned their losing hand into a winner.

They started a door-to-door sales business when they were in high school, worked hard at it, and later left Palm Beach (Fla.) Junior College when they discovered they were earning more money from their part-time business than the college president.

Inspired by a 1920 book titled "Think and Grow Rich," they expanded their sales enterprise into a national, then international operation.

They got tired of traveling, though, and got into the real estate business. They sold 57 homes their first year, and became millionaires.

Most important to them, they also started their booming career as motivational speakers. It's been growing by leaps and bounds, particularly since their "Real People" segment aired.

And all that's just the beginning, as far as Greg and John are concerned.

Sitting in a booth of a Hollywood restaurant near the Paramount studios soundstage where "Foul Play" is being shot, the Rices deliver an accounting of just where they intend to go, where they've been and of the "why" behind everything.

"You know, because of our size, we've had a lot of offers that would really have exploited us, and we've become wary. But when we went to see the producers and they explained this show to us — that we'd be playing Deborah Raffin's landlords, sort of taking the place Burgess Meredith had in the movie 'Foul Play' — we knew it was a good thing," says Greg. "They got very excited about using us. Paramount liked the idea ...

"And that's how we got drafted into the major leagues," says John.

The two were looking into acting classes until the show's producers informed them "they wanted just what they saw on 'Real People,'" says Greg.

"Some people spend years trying to create an identity — ours is built in," John notes. "I like to use the line that we leave a small impression on people."

The brothers are probably about the only new series stars walking into a show with no feel-

ing of risk. (The not-as-yet-scheduled series is planned as a midseason replacement — with 13 segments already ordered.) True to their well-proven business sense, they have all the angles involved in doing the show well figured out.

"We've become a much bigger draw on the lecture circuit since our first appearance on TV — in one 8-minute shot. Imagine the impact a series will have. We'll really pack the auditoriums and convention centers," says Greg.

"Goals change if you're really a goals-oriented person," comments John. "Our first goal was to get a car. Well, we got that. So, then our goal was to get a large home. Well, we got that. We have all those trappings. Now our values have changed. What we want to do now is inspire other people."

"It would be easy to cop out. Why should we go to the trouble of traveling all over the country all the time when we can make good money staying home concentrating on real estate? Because after you have 'X' amount of dollars, money isn't as important any more."

Greg and John rely on their own story to get their inspirational messages across. They talk about "being 3 feet tall in a 6-foot world, where you can't reach telephones and water fountains." They tell audiences about their failures and comebacks — adding the rationale that "even if you're only right 51 percent of the time, you're going to be a winner."

One of the Rices' proudest possessions is a letter from a man who told them he was destitute and near suicide until hearing their pitch to "try again" — after which he began successfully rebuilding his life.

"We get letters every week from people telling us we've helped them," says Greg. "They're worth more than any money."

Along with their expectations for even bigger lecture audiences, they're hoping their presence on the new series will serve as a motivation to viewers.

"We're not just talking about making money, we're talking about anything somebody wants to accomplish," says Greg. "Maybe a doctor will watch the show and think 'If those guys can do it, I can do it' — and maybe he'll go out and work on a cure for the cancer that killed our parents."

O'Conner is happy at 'Archie's Place'

By STEPHANIE DUBOIS
Gannett News Service

Q: I understand Carroll O'Connor is giving CBS contract arguments again. Does he want MORE money? — G.S., Springfield, Pa.

A: This happens to be the unique season where that's not true. He's signed, sealed and delivered and has spent his hiatus actively involved in developing "Archie's Place" scripts.

Mighty mites are making it in the big time

TWINS John and Gregg Rice are only 2ft. 10in. tall — but they think big.

They are the hottest real estate brokers in Florida and are fast carving out a showbusiness and TV career for themselves.

"Our success is due to one thing — work," said 27-year-old John. "Our size could have been a handicap but we have turned it to an advantage."

Last year, the two brothers, who are based in Palm Beach, sold close to \$4 million in real estate. It was their best year ever, but the twins have other projects on their minds.

They are guest hosts of the Real People TV series, go on lecture tours all over the country and are now getting into the movies.

"Our theme is positive thinking," said Gregg. "The lectures are motivational talks urging people to fulfill their ambitions. We try to point out that there is only one way to success and that is hard work."

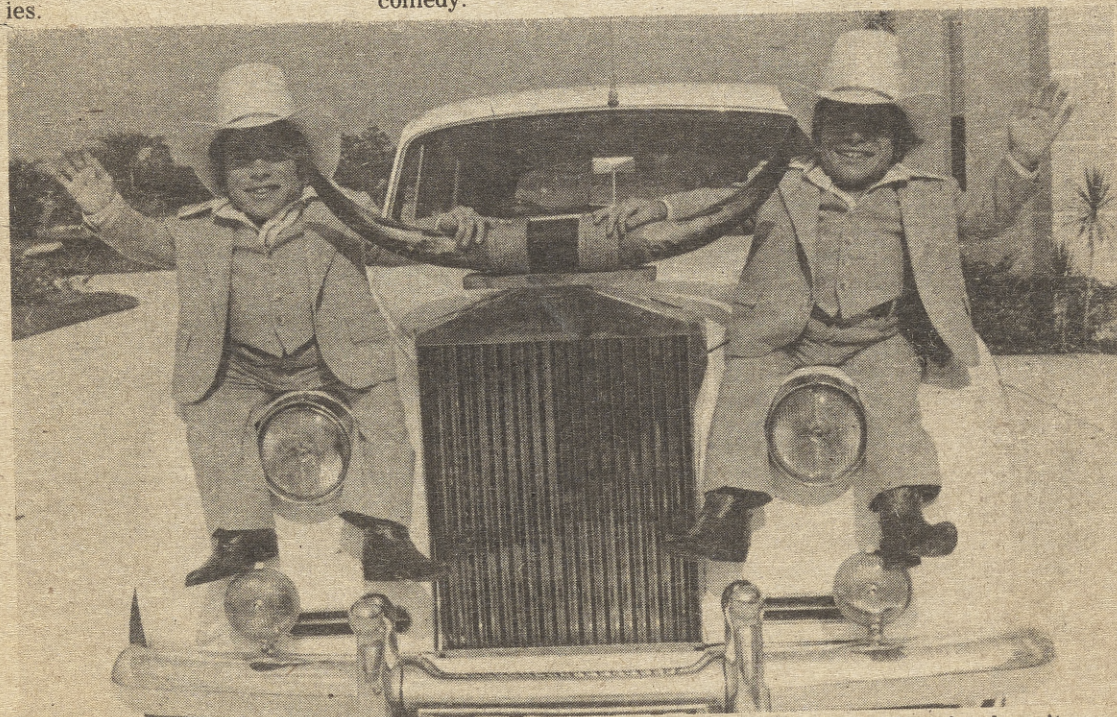
"People like winners," said John. "They don't like to see losers. In the business world, the only scorecard is a dollar, not home runs or touchdowns."

The brothers have just finished working in the Jerry Lewis movie *Hardly Working*, and are anxious for more film roles — as long as they're the right ones.

"We get offers all the time from Hollywood, but most of them are not for us," they said. "We don't want to make a living out of slapstick or knockdown comedy."



Gregg Rice (left) and brother John celebrate after tying up another land deal.



Riding high are Gregg (left) and John, two hard-driving businessmen who say that size doesn't count when it comes to carving out a fortune for themselves in real estate and showbiz.

Monday MARCH 24, 1980

West Sacramento Parley

Entertainer Thrives On Fact He's A Dwarf

By Iris Yang
Bee Staff Writer

As the waitress reached down to hand him his drink, Michael Lee Gogin pretended to drop the glass and then expertly caught it with his other hand, his eyes twinkling a mite too impishly. The waitress looked startled, then confused.

For Gogin, a 24-year-old entertainer and songwriter from San Francisco, has only recently come to grips with the fact that he is a dwarf, and now seems to thrive on it.

"For so many years, I didn't accept being a dwarf. Here I was living in 'your' world," Gogin said Saturday during the statewide convention of Little People of America in West Sacramento.

"Then I got introduced to LPA. It took four years to fully accept it — at first when I went to the meetings, I thought I was going to a freak show," he said.

"Now it's helped my writing — just recently, I began writing songs about my height," he added, reaching up and giving his fiancée an affectionate pat at her waist.

He said he is planning on making a film with Chevy Chase this summer entitled "Under the Rainbow." In addition, he provided the movement for one of the animated characters in the film "The Lord of the Rings."

Some 60 people — dwarfs and their normal-sized relatives and friends — convened "to go to workshops, play racquetball and go dancing in Old

Sacramento," said Joy Campbell of Sacramento, state coordinator for the organization.

This weekend's workshops focused on the problems of the parents of dwarf children, she said.

"Some parents say let the kids do whatever they want. Others say, 'oh, no they can't.'"

She said she was always expected to do what her four normal-sized siblings did — which at times included herding sheep on the family ranch.

"All this pity business, that's the worst thing you can do. You have to give them some latitude, encourage them to expand," said Campbell, 29, an executive secretary with a computer firm.

"God, I scored. I've got neat parents, a wonderful family."

A few feet away in the crowded room, Campbell's father was pointing to her, saying "My little girl grew up."

"I'm not little any more," his daughter laughingly agreed.

"At least, not in every way," Gogin quipped.

Also at the convention was film and television actor Billy Barty of Los Angeles who founded Little People of America 23 years ago. He said the group's national convention will be in Los Angeles between July 21-24 at the Pacifica Hotel.

Information about the convention can be obtained from Campbell at 5612A Hillsdale Blvd., Sacramento 95842; telephone number 331-6533.



Billy Barty, actor and founder of Little People of America, and Joy Campbell, state coordinator, at West Sacramento convention.

Dec 5, 1980

World



Luciano Fleury Da Cruz works on his latest manuscript

Author, 6, is the toast of Brazil

JUIZ DE FORA, Brazil (AP) — Luciano Fleury da Cruz has become a celebrity in Brazil by writing a book about bandits who try to take over a city by polluting its water supply with a pipe-corroding chemical and then kidnap all the city's plumbers to prevent repairs.

Luciano is 6 years old.

"He's been writing stories since he was 4," his mother, Therezina, said in a recent interview. "This was his first book and on a lark we submitted it to a publisher. Somehow the newspapers found out and since then everything's been just crazy."

Reporters line up for inter-

views. Nationwide television shows scramble to invite the boy to appear. Strangers knock on the door and ask for copies of his 60-page book.

The book, a children's story, is called "A Epidemia Hidraulica," Portuguese for "The Plumbing Epidemic." In it Luciano writes: "Castor was sleeping when the tap began to drip heavily and he woke up and went to fix it. But it kept dripping and he kept getting angrier.... Luckily his friend Mosca, the detective, managed to plug the leaking hole, but they needed a plumber."

"They went to the workshop of Metalico, Mosca's plumber.

But when they got there it was closed. Castor's house remained flooded, and so did all the other houses in the city because all the plumbers had disappeared."

"I don't know where Luciano gets the ideas for his stories," his mother said. "He won't accept suggestions from us, and if we try to help he throws a tantrum and runs into his room."

Luciano insisted his stories are wholly original but admitted to being influenced by Walt Disney and Brazil's best-selling author, Jorge Amado.

"One reporter didn't believe Luciano wrote the book by

himself," his father, Afonso, recalled. "So Luciano took the man's pen, sat down in front of him and wrote a chapter."

Luciano said it takes him two to four months to finish a book, writing when and where inspiration strikes. He wrote the last chapter of his book in his pediatrician's waiting room. Illustrations are drawn by cousin Marinete, supervised by the author.

Luciano's father is a sociologist, his mother a social worker who quit her job when their only child started showing signs of precociousness.

AUTHOR See page 31

World Author

Continued from page 30

Luciano taught himself to read and write at age 2, his mother said. "We used to buy him books and paper and pencils," she added. "Then one day I walked over to his crib and he was writing the word 'gato' (cat). Two years later he was writing short stories."

Schooling has been a problem, she said. Luciano skipped the first grade, entering public school this year at the second-grade level. He barely studies but still gets straight A's.

"School bores him," his mother said, "but what can we do? There aren't any schools for gift-

ed children in the area." The family lives in the fashionable neighborhood in Juiz De Fora, a southeastern city of 300,000.

Other problems may be his size, far smaller than children his age, and a birth defect which left Luciano with a large head and squat stature. His parents said they fear Luciano's relationships with classmates would suffer if he were placed with children much bigger than he is.

Luciano said he gets along fine with other kids, although he prefers the company of his teachers because, he said, "the conversation is more interesting."

"The Plumbing Epidemic" had a first printing of just 100 copies. "We had intended to distribute them only among family and friends," Luciano's father explained. "We didn't want to make

it seem we were exploiting the boy."

The boy has a different version. "My father wouldn't let me sell it," he said. "That sure was dumb."

His father now is negotiating a second printing of 200 copies with a small local publishing house. These also will be distributed free, he said. "Luciano will turn professional only with his second book."

The second book — and the third — are already written. Luciano's father is typing the manuscripts from the author's handwritten notebooks. "The Treasure of Comba-Tomba" and "The End of the Hunt" should be published in January with printings of at least 2,000 copies each.

All profits will go to Luciano, his father said.

Doctors say she'll never grow up

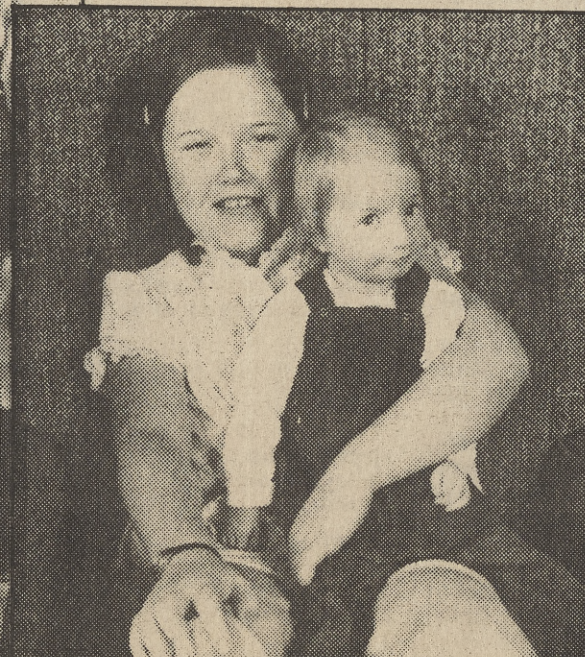


By JIM BARRETT
Californian Staff Writer

Doctors say blonde, blue-eyed Mindy Wells of Salinas will never grow up. Mindy is 4 years old and weighs 11 pounds. At birth, she weighed four pounds. Mindy is the victim of a rare birth defect known as "46 XX 4R."

"I have every mother's dream. You know how people always say 'I wish they could stay little forever,'" said Mindy's mother, Pat Wells, 28.

Mrs. Wells and her husband, Mike, a forklift driver, have two daughters. Michelle, 9, was born normally and lives her life like most any girl. Mindy, who is 28 inches tall, lives in a world large



(Californian photos by Clay Peterson)

Mindy sits with her parents (left), Pat and Mike Wells, and sister, Michelle, 9.

and vast.

The question of "why" lingered in Mrs. Wells' mind for several months after Mindy was born, but she refuses to turn the mystery over in her mind anymore.

"If you spend all your time looking for a reason," she said, "that's just time wasted."

Mrs. Wells said few strangers believe her when she tells them Mindy's age. Once at a restaurant, the waitress became hostile because she thought the Wellses were lying.

Mrs. Wells said the bigness of things impedes Mindy's development.

Most toys are too big for her to play with. Few chairs are small enough for her. Toothbrushes are too big for her to learn to brush.

Until the mid-1960s, physicians had no explanation of why perhaps one in a million newborns failed to grow. When researchers learned to "map" human chromosomes, they found the stories that told why growth was retarded.

In Mindy's case, the No. 4 chromosome broke for unexplained reasons and restructured itself as a ring, Mrs. Wells said.

Mindy's disorder is a rare form of dwarfism. The few known sufferers tend to be among the smallest of dwarfs, according to Dr. Luigi Luzzatti, director of the Birth Defects Center at Stanford Medical Center.

Mrs. Wells said her one regret is failing to insist that her obstetrician extract amniotic fluid from the womb during her pregnancy. The test would have shown the probability of a birth defect, she said.

Mindy plays like any infant her size. She likes to watch cartoons on television, plays with animals and turns the pages in a book.

As an infant, Mindy relished a peek-a-boo game where she would hide under the skirt of the family rocking chair.

Although she has yet to learn to speak, Mindy gestures and makes noises to communicate, Mrs. Wells said. Doctors at Stanford Medical Center, who have studied Mindy's case, have suggested teaching her sign language in the interim, Mrs. Wells said.

Mindy's father said she is expected to walk in a year and her development should improve, although Mindy probably will not grow much taller.

Mindy is reaching for high objects, trying to stand. She crawls now and gets into plenty of trouble, according to her mother. "That's her most outstanding trait — mischievousness," Mrs. Wells said.

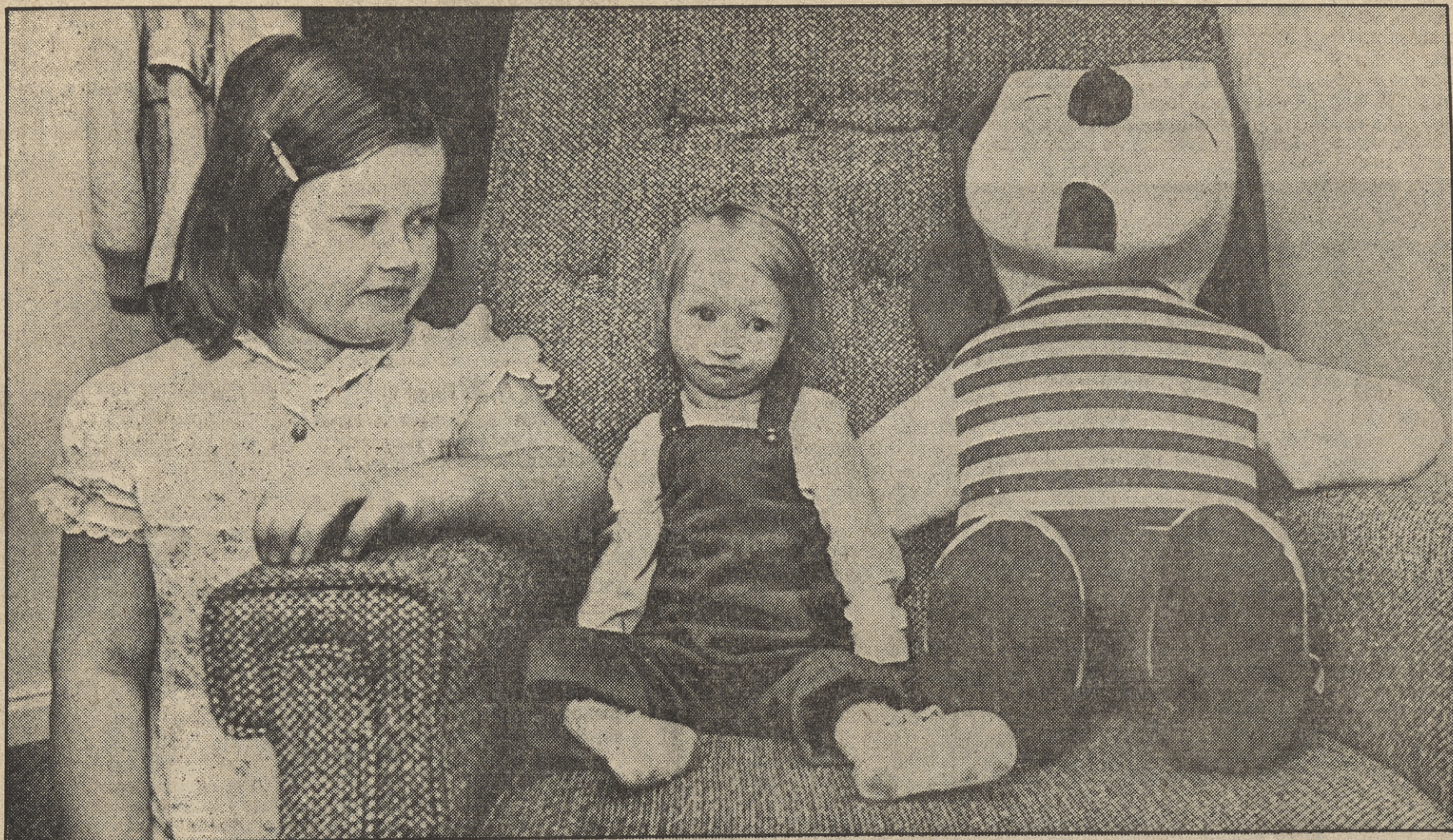
Mindy receives special instruction at the Arthur B. Ingham School for the Handicapped in the San Benancio area. Her instruction is frequently interrupted by illness because Mindy is extremely susceptible to colds and the flu, Mrs. Wells said.

Mrs. Wells said she had to quit her job because Mindy requires full-time care. "Even though she is in school," Mrs. Wells said of Mindy, "she will get sick every other day and have to come home."

The associated medical expenses also dashed any hope the couple had of buying their own home, Mrs. Wells said. She said Mindy needs a special bedroom and bathroom with furnishings small enough to make them convenient and useable.

Despite the burdens, Mindy is a joy to her parents and a remarkably loving child, Mrs. Wells said.

"She will always be with me and I'll never give her up," Mrs. Wells said.



The Associated Press

Chromosome shuffle deals permanent childhood

Mindy Wells sits with "Snoopy," while sister Michele watches. Both are daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Mike Wells of Salinas. Mindy weighed 4 pounds at birth and at age 4 weighs 11 pounds and is 28 inches tall. Mich-

ele is 9 years old. Mindy never will grow into an adult, doctors say, because of a chromosome mixup called "46 XX 4R" that affects one in one million infants. Unable to talk, Mindy is learning sign language and

doctors say she might be able to walk in one year. She behaves like any child her size, her mother says, adding, "I have every mother's dream — who wishes her child could stay young forever."

8F

San Jose Mercury News

Life's no big problem for 'Squirt'

As a soft drink's trademark, Bill Albaugh has made a splash

By John Platero
The Associated Press

TAMARAC, Fla.

BILL Albaugh doesn't mind one bit when he's teased about his short stature. He only hopes if you're going to give him a nickname, you'll call him "Squirt."

That's easily explained. For 33 years, he's been the living trademark for a soft drink bearing that name.

Albaugh is what the uninformed refer to as a "midget" or "dwarf," but like the thousands afflicted with a quirk in the human growth process, he prefers being called a "little person."

"You kind of learn to accept the teasing," says the jovial 4-foot-7-inch Albaugh, who was born in Mingo Junction, Ohio. "The only people who are cruel are those who are ignorant. But 'little people' learn to develop a sense of humor; otherwise, life would be tough."

He admits his career with Squirt & Co. began as a novelty because of the coincidence with its name and his size. But, his knack for salesmanship proved him to be of double value for his employer. He now travels three weeks of every month, not only as a "living trademark," but also to help train salesmen, solve account problems and handle public relations.

"We're very fortunate to have Bill with us," said J.W. Brookes, the company's executive vice president, from his office in Holland, Mich., "not only because of the clever twist between his size and our product, but because he is very able. He's an unusual, sensitive person and one of our most experienced salesmen."

At home, Albaugh is a veritable giant standing next to his wife, Marie. He teases that he's grown seven inches during their 23 years of marriage while she's still 3-foot-11.

The two are very active in helping other "little people." Albaugh founded the South Florida Mini-Gators 10 years ago, and the group now has more than 50 members.

"We help each other on where to buy clothing or shoes and things like that," explained Mrs. Albaugh. "After all, it's not easy to find a cocktail dress for someone 3-foot-11."

The Mini-Gators also tackle more serious problems — like helping parents cope with the shock of learning their child is a "little person."

"'Little people' also have a problem accepting themselves," said Albaugh. "Sometimes they are told they can't do anything and then they believe it and hide from the world."

The Albaughs are good examples that being small is detrimental only if one lets it become so. "We've led a normal and very good life," said Mrs. Albaugh. And their home is no different from anyone else's.

"People think everything will be little in our house," said Mrs. Albaugh, "but our friends and rela-



The Associated Press

If you can't call 4-foot-7 Bill Albaugh 'Squirt,' 'little person' will do

tives aren't small. It would be uncomfortable for them if everything was made to accommodate us."

The only concession Mrs. Albaugh allows herself is a small ladder she uses in the kitchen. "That's the only exercise I get," she laughed, "going up and down that ladder."

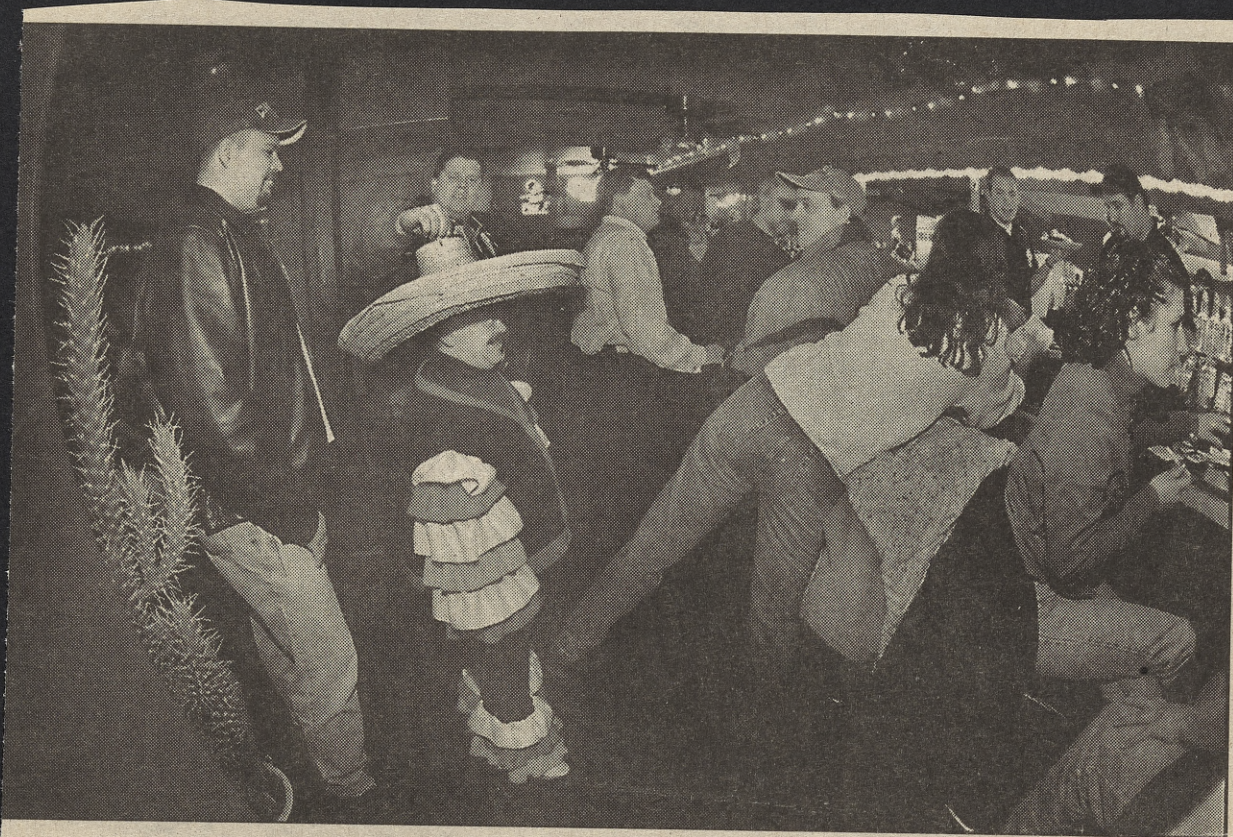
Albaugh's only complaint with life is that much is denied "little people."

"There's no reason, for example, why 'little people' can't serve in the armed forces. There are plenty of desk jobs we could do. It's part of the old myth that the only place for 'little people' is in the circus."

But, they both also find some humor in being small. "One child saw me in the supermarket and told his mother, 'Look, Mommy, that lady shrunk,'" Mrs. Albaugh said with a chuckle.

Her husband's greatest thrill happened when he was in high school. Albaugh loved athletics, so he usually took care of the sports equipment.

"One time our basketball team was way ahead of a rival school," recalled Albaugh. "So to put a little salt on the wound, the coach sent me in and I played the last two minutes. That was great!"



Steve Vento serves nachos and salsa from his sombrero at Nacho Mama's in Milwaukee. Scripps Howard News Service photo

Short order

Group angry about dwarf's role at restaurant

■ A 4-foot-4 man who previously portrayed the McDonald's Hamburglar says people should have a sense of humor about his job.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

MILWAUKEE — A new Milwaukee restaurant that features a dwarf serving chips and salsa from a modified sombrero on his head has met with outrage from a group for short people.

The restaurant, Nacho Mama's, held its grand opening Wednesday. It features 4-foot-4 Steve Vento as an entertainer and server. Vento, a car salesman, also has worked as a comic. He's previously appeared live portraying characters such as Marc's Big Boy and the McDonald's Hamburglar.

Said Vento: "We've only had one person saying that it was degrading. I told her, 'I don't remember anyone putting you in charge.' We're nothing more than a handful of people having a good time."

Anthony Soares disagreed.

"I think that it's barbaric," said

Soares, spokesman for Little People of America, a nonprofit support organization for people of short stature. "It's humiliating and it's exploiting a disability. It's disgusting."

Soares, speaking from his offices in New York City, added: "It's horrifying to realize that people are still being exploited for their size. You couldn't do that with, say, an Asian pulling a rickshaw. People would say that's racist."

"Short-statured people are often forced into entertainment, and this kind of thing is only going to promote those stereo types," Soares added.

But Ed Lump, of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association, says: "Frankly, it may turn out to be a boon for people with height problems. They might be able to make a lot of money doing this."

The restaurant's owner, Johnny Vassallo, confirmed that the restaurant has had only one complaint so far. Vassallo said he has hired two other short entertainers to fill in when Vento is not available. The 150-seat restaurant features Mexican food and is not affiliated with other Nacho Mama's restaurants around the country,

Vassallo said.

Vento has already proven to be a hit with the patrons who came to Nacho Mama's for its grand opening and for two preview parties, Vassallo said. In addition to nacho rounds, Vento also does magic tricks and makes balloon animals.

Vento wears a black pantsuit with ruffles in tortilla yellow, queso orange and salsa red on his arms and legs. He said he is paid \$20 an hour, and makes about \$40 to \$60 a night in tips. The straw sombrero is nearly three feet wide, and he some times bumps into the wall as he navigates the narrow walkway behind a row of bar stools. Tortilla chips are piled around the rim of his sombrero. A stainless steel bowl filled with salsa is set in the top of his hat.

"One couple brought in their 3-year-old, who grabbed my hat," Vento said. "Chips went flying and there was salsa all over the walls."

Vento walks from bar stool to bar stool and table to table inviting people to dig in as he makes balloon animals. People greet him with a smile. "I don't see anything degrading at all about this. As for people who think it's degrading, they should get a life," said Vento.



Gul Mohammad, at 25 inches the world's shortest man, strolls with friends in New Delhi's old bazaar.

— A short story — 1980's

World's smallest man looking for regular-size wife

NEW DELHI, India (AP) — In the narrow and crowded lanes of the old bazaar, a 25-inch-tall man sits in a store selling candy and hoping to find a wife.

"It is a hard life to be a dwarf, and to be the world's shortest living matured man is even harder," Gul Mohammad said in his whispery voice as he counted coins and handed sweets to children much taller than he.

Mohammad is 3.3 inches shorter than the shortest living adult listed by the 1988 Guinness Book of Records, Nelson de la Rosa of the Dominican Republic.

"No one noticed me before, until a local newspaper reporter had a chance meeting with a friend of mine, who told her about me," Mohammad, 32, said.

He is the eldest of four children of Noor Mohammad and Fatma Begum.

"My first issue were twins, Gul and Zahoor. Both were dwarfs," Fatma said in her one-room home in the Ballimaran district of Old Delhi. "Zahoor died after four years, but Gul lived to become a man."

The others, a boy and a girl, grew to normal size.

Gul, which means flower in the Urdu language, is lonely and wants to get married. He was 10 when his father died. His mother soon remarried, and Gul went to live with his maternal uncle, where he stays today.

"I want to marry someone who is of normal height so that she can carry me around, feed me and give me bath....I do not want to live on the charity of my relatives forever," he said.

His arms are so short that his hands "can't reach his head while bathing," said his aunt, Nargis Begum.

Mohammad started his candy business with an investment of about \$35, but he has been robbed twice.

"I could not do anything. I have decided when I marry I will ask my wife to sit with me in the candy store," he said with a broad smile.

Mohammad, whose only vice is smoking, giggles constantly.

"I used to get very upset when people laughed at me, but I figured out if I laughed back that fixes them," he said.

"Being the shortest man is not a joke. It is a hard existence," Mohammad said.

Walking is difficult for Mohammad, who pays about 30 cents a day to teen-agers who piggyback him where he wants to go.

newschronicle

Thousand Oaks, California

Monday, June 22, 1981

20 cents



Size is no object

Otto and Isadora Bohmann take a stroll down their Newbury Park street with their daughter, Mary Anne. Although both parents are dwarfs, their child, at age 17, is already 5 feet 8. (News Chronicle photo by Randy Pench)

Little people

From Page 1

Many LPA members and non-members have volunteered for research testing at Harbor General Hospital's short stature clinic. While the cause is yet undetermined, medical experts speculate dwarfism may be caused by men who father children at an advanced age.

While overcoming major social stigmas, LPA also helps little people adjust to commonplace chores which can be routine challenges for them.

"We have fun. We discuss every problem a little person has, and some of them are humorous and some are not."

Grocery shopping, for example, is difficult when a store shelf is out of reach. For years, the Bohmanns brought along Mary Anne to stand in the cart and pluck the unreachable items.

"You had to watch her, though," Otto said, shaking a finger. "She loved pretzels and we'd always find them in the cart when it was time to check out."

Now that Mary Anne is grown, her parents simply stand in the aisles "until a polite person comes along."

They shop for shoes at children's stores and must tailor all of their clothing to fit, since their torsos are normal-sized while their limbs are relatively short.

LPA has assisted with certain unalterable items such as pantyhose, which small women once could not buy to fit, Isadora recalls. After discussing the problem at a group meeting, one woman wrote to Sears Roebuck and Co. and discovered that they had an accommodating size. A pair was distributed to every little person at the next session.

Sadly, however, the problems of dwarfism have run



Four-foot-tall Isadora Bohmann doesn't need to crouch as she looks over her daughter's shoulder while she is doing her homework. (News Chronicle photo by Randy Pench)

deeper than purchasing a wardrobe.

The Bohmanns recall times when infants diagnosed as dwarfs were abandoned at hospitals by their mothers. One such child was later adopted by a small couple who, unlike its natural mother, realized the child's potential, the Bohmanns say.

One 20-year-old dwarf boy "couldn't even read a street sign" because his parents had literally sheltered him within their house to "protect him" from the world.

The problem of the small children — "little littles" as they are called — raises a moral question each time a dwarf couple is confronted with the decision of whether to have a child.

The chances of delivering a normal child are 50 percent, the Bohmanns explain, odds which prompt outsiders to dissuade them from raising a family. They wonder how small parents can discipline a child who is a foot taller than they before it graduates from junior high school.

A home with unaltered fixtures and un-scaled-down furniture offers little clue that Mary Anne Bohmann was reared by small parents. The only indication of their size, in fact, is the abundance of small stools scattered throughout the rooms and the fact that she often has to pull items from the freezer or close the bathroom window for her parents.

"She's our little miracle," Isadora said of the daughter doctors once said she could not conceive.

"Of course, we're happy that Mary Anne is normal because you always want what's best for your children," Isadora says. "But it wouldn't have made any difference."

By the time Mary Anne was 12, she was already a head taller than her mother. "But we can yell just as loud as big parents," her father said proudly.

day, June 22, 1981



Stepping up

Standing on one of many stools in her home, Isadora Bohmann does dishes with the help of her daughter, Mary Anne, who helps her small parents reach things in high places. (News Chronicle photo by Randy Pench)

No longer 'freaks'

Attitudes are changing toward little people, say N.P. couple

By FAYE FIORE

There was a time when most people would have assumed that Otto Bohmann's destiny lay in a circus sideshow as one of nature's "freaks."

They might have decided that because he is short on stature, he is also short on intelligence. They would likely have assumed that he would never marry, much less raise a child. Even further, they may have decreed that he had no right to even try.

But the world is changing for Bohmann, his wife, Isadora, and the thousands of little people like them in America.

The Newbury Park man, who is 4 feet 4 inches tall, and his family live an unfettered life in a tall world. The reason is not that public drinking fountains are any easier to reach, that supermarket shelves are any more accommodating or that telephone booths are any more accessible.

Neither have Bohmann and his 4-foot wife grown any taller. The difference is that many people today have stopped measuring their merit with a yardstick.

"We have had to educate people that we are as self-sufficient as anyone and can handle everyday problems like a normal person," Isadora said, during an interview in the modest white home where she, Otto and their daughter, Mary Anne, have lived for 16 years.

Otto, who works as a data mechanic at Rocketdyne in Canoga Park, and Isadora, a homemaker, have adapted to overcoming the social misconceptions that are literally more crippling to the small person than is his size.

The little people are no longer fated to work as bellboys who look like children but never outgrow the job.

They outspokenly resent the term "midget," which implies that they deviate in more ways than size.

Asked if there is anything they feel they cannot do, the Bohmanns respond in chorus: "Reach things."

"A lot of people think that because we are small, we don't have a mind or a brain like other people. But we do," Isadora said emphatically. "Some of us are highway department engineers, board of education members and lawyers. Two identical twins who are small are millionaires."

"And 25 years ago, little people thought all they could do was be a clown in a circus and that's all there was in life for you," Otto said, climbing up on a gold couch to take his place next to his wife.

A change in attitudes of people tall and small has made it possible for the Bohmanns to fall in love, marry and raise a healthy 17-year-old daughter who was reared in The Conejo and is now attending Newbury Park High School. ("And she's 5 foot 8!" they say with an air of celebration.)

When Otto came to the United States from Yugoslavia in 1950, government officials refused to admit him until the National Catholic Welfare Committee posted a \$1,000 bond assuring he would not be a "burden to society."

Thirty years later, little people are fighting to reverse society's assumption that they "can't," while urging small people to begin believing that they "can," the Bohmanns contend.

Much of their inner strength is drawn from Little People of America, a 5,000 member society which operates under the motto: "Think big." LPA encourages the discussion of problems, advances medical research into the causes of dwarfism and provides an outlet for socializing that has led to a long list of successful marriages.

"The organization has brought everybody together," Isadora said of the group, founded by actor Billy Barty in 1957 when he appeared on the once-popular television show "This Is Your Life" and beckoned every small person watching to join.

Since then, Barty has led the fight to have the estimated 100,000 little people in the United States accepted among other minorities, to improve job opportunities and further the research into the cause of dwarfism.

(See LITTLE PEOPLE, Page 2)



America's Smallest Drummer

There's more than a drum inside this drum case (above) — there's a drummer (above right). Little Peter Risch, who's just 32 inches tall, is the nation's smallest drummer. He uses a custom-made, scaled-down set of drums while sitting in with a combo at a Los Angeles club (right).



Little People is big aid to dwarfs

■ Little People tries to counter the stigmatization dwarfs are subjected to. The group also supports the parents, most of whom are average size.

By Mike Barenti
Idaho Falls Post-Register

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho - Betty Jacobsen felt guilty for months after her son, Adam, was born.

He was healthy and she knew he would eventually grow up and have a fine life. But she couldn't stop thinking about the genetic difference that meant Adam's bones would not grow like other people's bones. Adam would never be 6-foot-4 like his father.

"I felt guilty that I was upset because Adam was a dwarf," Jacobsen said. Until he was about 10 months old, she kept wondering about things like: "How's he going to ride a bike?" But Adam can ride a bike, and play baseball and roller hockey and do just about anything else an 11-year-old boy does.

After Jacobsen got over her guilt, she began looking for information about dwarfism. She found Little People of America. The group, set up in 1957, is designed to educate the public about Little People, said Shannon Carstens, an Idaho Falls resident. She goes to schools around the area to talk about people like herself and shows videos and slides. Most people just don't know much about it, she said.

"It's not that the public's cruel," he said. "They just don't know."

Dwarf Rob Fille

About 50 members of Little People of America from Idaho, Utah, Washington and Oregon recently met in Idaho Fall. "It's just a get-together," said Carstens, who runs Carstens' Bakery with her husband. The group has 5,000 members nationwide.

But there's more to the meeting than just giving people a chance to socialize. They want to dispel the side-show stigma Little People often live with, said Rob Fille, the district director and a computer-aided drafting technician who works for the Navy in Bangor, Wash. "It's been a stereotype that's been on us for centuries," he said.

Fille said he has faced discrimination all his life because of his size. Junior High School was one of the worst times, he said. But his size also has cost him jobs, and even now, co-workers will often do things like have conversations other over the top of his head, as if he wasn't there. "It's not that the public's cruel," he said. "They just don't know."

There are roughly 25,000 Little People in the United States, Fille said. Some are dwarfs, meaning their bones grow differently than what is considered normal. There are 250 different types of dwarfs, he said. Those sometimes referred to as midgets have a problem with their pituitary gland, so they do not grow as big as the average person, Carstens said.

About 80 percent of dwarfs are born to average-sized parents, Jacobsen said. One of the most important things Little People of America does is help those parents. "It is very traumatic — I know it was for us," she said.

Jacobsen shares what she has learned helping Adam with other parents. She also learns what's worked for other parents. "There's no point in re-inventing the wheel," she said.

'LIFE'S LIKE BEING ON STAGE'

Film Opens Doors For 'Small People'

By JO DeLYON
Tribune Staff Writer

Kevin Thompson, 22, climbed up, situated himself in an easy chair and displayed his feet, dangling many inches from the floor. "It's something we just have to live with," said the 4-foot, 5½-inch "small person."

To San Gabriel resident Thompson and his visiting "small" friends, Lydia Green, 30, who stands 3-foot-10, and Phil Fondacaro, 22, who is 3-foot-8, "Every day is like being on stage," in Thompson's words.

"When we walk into a room, we know people know we're there, especially when there is a group," Thompson said.

Thompson, a theater major at Pasadena City College, talked about the recent Universal Studios movie, "Under the Rainbow," which brought him, his friends and 145 other "small people" together for parts as Munchkin extras.

The film, co-starring Chevy Chase and Carrie Fisher, depicts the behind the scenes life of the Munchkins, who were recruited nationwide to play in the 1938 film "The Wizard of Oz."

The movie is about what the "small people" did to the Culver City Hotel when they met 150 of their own kind after being hired.

"The movie is based on fact, but very exaggerated," Fondacaro said.

"Basically, we get to act like Shriners at a convention and go nuts," Thompson added with excitement.

"We get drunk, toilet-paper rooms, hang from chandeliers, roll down stairs and generally rip the Culver City Hotel set apart," Fondacaro said proudly.

"A number of other subplots make up the movie. We are just the wallpaper," Mrs. Green explained.

Although the group said meeting and working with Chevy Chase, Alan Arkin and Eve Arden "was truly an experience," there is a unique twist to this film.

Fondacaro described it as a film that "liberates small people."

"It is the first time small people are seen as actual human beings, not just freaks, circus people or child stand-ins."

Most of the group's members said they heard about auditions through Little People of America, an organization founded by "little person" and Hollywood star Billy Barty.

The group boasts a membership of 3,000 "small people" across the nation.

More than 500 "little people" tried out for parts and only 150 were selected to play Munchkins, Thompson said.

Casting and crew involved about 600 people, Thompson said.

The casting directors were specifically looking for "little people" who were agile, Thompson explained.

"Sometimes 'little people' have birth defects and can't move properly," he said.

However, the small trio reportedly had no such problems. In fact, Fondacaro said, "I did several of my own stunts," including a scene where the Munchkin extra rolls down a flight of stairs.

"The first time I did it," Fondacaro said, "I got a standing ovation from the cast."

According to the group, "small people" cast members were treated like royalty.

Some 45 production assistants were hired to take care of their every whim.

Art director Peter Wooley even built special stools so they could eat with everyone, Lydia said.

"We were fed like kings," Fondacaro added.

As extras, the Munchkins made \$100 a day during the more than six months filming.

The crew of "small" extras was also provided with video games and color televisions for entertainment between takes.

"To me, every day spent on the set was a new adventure," Thompson added.

"I was fascinated by being behind the scenes."

"It was like being a small time actor in big time movies," he said, a sparkle in his eye.

"Little people" have come a long way," Thompson said. "Under the Rainbow" has opened doors for us all over."

An actors' guild for "little people" was recently formed and is working out of the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles.

"We want to show that we can play roles other than those just for 'little people,' like Shakespeare and other heavy dramas," Thompson said.

"Sometimes being small makes me feel special," he admitted.

"God put me here for a reason. So I might as well entertain and try to put a smile on someone's face."

"But a lot of times I cover up my true feelings (about being small) by being funny," he said.

As a "small person" Thompson said, "You are constantly stared at. Usually I just stare back. You either learn to grow with it (the stares) or regress."

Fondacaro thought for a moment and said, "I think 'small people' are crazier than regular-size people."

Thompson continued, "My friends and I will just be crazy at a disco. And we will end up hearing people say, 'Oh my God! A bunch of midgets just came in and tore the place apart.'"

"Children's reactions to me are the most fun," Fondacaro said.

"My favorite is the little child who comes up to you and whispers in amazement, 'Hey, guess what? You're small,'" he said with a good-humored laugh.

"My reaction to questions and comments depends on what kind



Tribune Photos by Raleigh Souther

FATHER AND SON—Phil Fondacaro, a "small person," takes his son, Andrew, 2½, to the playground at the San Gabriel residence of Kevin Thompson, another "small person." Below, cast members from Universal Studio's

film "Under the Rainbow" Lydia Green, Fondacaro and Thompson, background, relax with a bit of horseplay. The film, to be released soon, co-stars Chevy Chase and Carrie Fisher.

of mood I'm in," Thompson said.

"Sometimes when kids ask their mom, 'Why is that little man like that?' I reply, 'I got stuck in a dryer and shrank.'"

"We get asked a lot of weird questions all the time," other members of the group said. "Like, where do you buy your clothes?"

Thompson replied, "I bought the pants I'm wearing at Miller's Outpost. I just cut the legs off."

People generally asked how "small people" reach tall places, Thompson and Fondacaro said.

"I have stools all over the house to help me reach light switches," Thompson said.

"And when I go grocery shopping I usually climb up the shelves and get what I need," he added.

"Small people" usually operate automobiles by installing brake and gas pedal extensions, the two explained.

"We also eat the same kind and amount of food that regular size people do," Thompson said.

"And the song 'Short People' by Randy Newman is one of my favorites," Fondacaro added.

Fondacaro, a freelance graphic artist and graduate of California Institute of Arts in Valencia, is also married to an over 5-foot woman.

He is the father of two normal sons Andrew, 2½, and Nicolas, eight months.

He and his wife, Jeanine, agreed, "My height has never been a problem in our marriage."

It is usually the same for most people, Fondacaro said. "Once they get over the initial shock that I am a 'small person,' they soon view me as a human being and it doesn't matter."





AP Laserphoto

Carrie Fisher, left, with arm outstretched, walks with actor Chevy Chase among the cast of midgets during the filming of "Under

the Rainbow" in Los Angeles. The 24-year-old actress previously played Princess Leia in the two "Star Wars" movies.

Friday, July 31, 1981

The Bakersfield Californian

'Rainbow' strange film made even stranger

from page C6

cheeldren! Eet must be recess!"

"Under the Rainbow" was directed by Steve Rash, who brings to this film the same attention to detail that distinguished his other feature, "The Buddy Holly Story." The earlier material suited him better. Rash has earnestness and a touch of eccentricity, but he doesn't have the lighthearted wit to keep this kind of comedy working.

Perhaps there's nothing wrong with "Under the Rainbow" that more laughs couldn't have cured. But it also seems that Rash takes his material too seriously, so that he winds up pursuing all the plot's loose ends, instead of succumbing happily to their patent silliness.

The cast includes Pat McCormick, "The Tonight Show" writer who played Carol Burnett's hilariously ardent suitor in "A Wedding" and who is one of five persons credited with the understandably uneven screenplay here. Mr. McCormick has the joke that is both the movie's funniest and its most macabre.

His performance — like Miss Arden's, Adam Arkin's (as the hotel manager watching everything run amok), Barty's villain and Cork Hubbert's pint-size hero — is at the mercy of the material. All of them are funny on the occasions when they've been given something funny to do, but there are frequent flat interludes.

Miss Fisher looks great, and her manner is tough and spunky. But

she doesn't quite melt at the sight of Chase, which creates some problems with the romantic subplot; her initial standoffishness is awfully convincing. So is Chase's lassitude, although his slyness and shrewd timing reappear now and then.

He does a wonderful job with each of the various Streudels, particularly the one who gets his seat in the hotel dining room and won't let Chase eat his dinner. "Hope this little devil lasts out the evening," he says blithely about one of them.

According to the production notes, the filmmakers paid careful attention to their Munchkins — it was difficult to lure so many non-actor midget extras away from their regular jobs, and the costumes had to be handmade. It's surprising, then, that the movie has gathered so many of them together and yet conveys so little feeling for them.

Some of them have well-developed individual characters to play, but as a group their role is uncertain. The movie isn't out to exploit them, but it isn't out to understand them, either. It just lets them mill around en masse until, by the end of the story, it's hard to remember why they've been gathered together in the first place.

"Under The Rainbow" is rated PG ("Parental Guidance Suggested"). It has a strain of bawdy humor.

1981

'Under the Rainbow' falls short of mark

By JANET MASLIN
New York Times

NEW YORK — The makers of "Under the Rainbow" have taken a strange idea and run with it, making it a good deal stranger.

The year is 1938, "The Wizard of Oz" is about to be made, and a movie studio is auditioning Munchkins. So 150 midgets are holed up at the Culver City Hotel, preparing to don winged-monkey outfits and start swinging from the chandeliers.

This would be plot enough for any movie, but it's about one-tenth of what goes on in "Under the Rainbow," which has enough story angles to make your head spin.

"Under the Rainbow" aspires to a breathless, madcap brand of comedy that would have required enormous energy and resourcefulness to be sustained. So the fact that the movie spins along at all is, in its way, impressive.

For a while, as characters knock into one another in coincidence after crazy coincidence, the film seems to have ingenuity and momentum, or at least enough of the bizarre to hold an audience's attention. Later on, the energy runs out, but the gags keep cranking along anyhow.

The bizarre aspect of the movie is hardly the presence of the would-be Munchkins; if anything, they seem the sanest people around. Also on hand are a perky talent scout in charge of auditioning them (Carrie Fisher), a Secret Service agent with an eye for the talent scout (Chevy Chase), the elderly European aristocrats the agent is guarding (Eve Arden and Joseph Maher), 25 Japanese photographers in white suits, one Japanese spy in a white suit and a tiny German agent (Billy Barty) in charge of locating the right Japanese.

There's plenty more going on, too, all in this same wildly fanciful vein.

There is also an element of black humor, as in a subplot about the European aristocrats' dog, named Streudel. The dog keeps getting into fatal accidents, and the Duke keeps substituting new hounds, none of which resemble one another very closely. No matter. The Duchess, as played very amusingly by Miss Arden, hasn't got a very keen eye for detail.

On first encountering dozens of midgets in the hotel lobby, she exclaims: "Oh, look at all zee see 'Rainbow' — page C8

VIEW



MARSHA TRAEGER / Los Angeles Times

Ginny Brown and Pam Garrison, Colorado teen-agers, celebrate their arrival in Reno, host to 25th Little People of America convention.



Tripping the Light Fantastic

LPA teen-agers, shown at left, enjoyed a special dance, while Pat Bilon, center, who played E.T. in most of movie's scenes, got media attention. Right is fellow Ohioan, Walter Menning, retired steelworker.

LITTLE PEOPLE

Continued from Second Page

formal discussions with other members of the San Francisco chapter to which they belong, but never run a formal workshop.

The Farringtons planned to tell other people of their first-hand experiences in dealing with a short-statured child. Their oldest daughter, Yvette, is now 12, and a member of the pre-teen group of little people. Their other daughter, Dana, 10 is of average size.

"A lot of the things we're going to discuss we have done," said Jim Farrington, a sergeant on the Oakland police force. "Good and bad things. Sometimes there is a tendency to be overprotective. One of the concerns we had was how her peer group would treat her. There is a tendency to want to baby her. It's hard sometimes for an average size person to treat a little person by their chronological age, as opposed to size."

"I have had to stop myself sometimes in being over-protective of Yvette," said Yvonne. "If someone asked

her a question I would answer for her. Then I realized what I was doing and stopped."

On her part, Yvette, a charming young girl, just wishes that "people would quit asking me questions. They stare at you, ask how old you are. They ask how old your parents were when you were born. I say, 'tough luck,' and don't answer when they ask that."

The Farringtons, who have been involved with LPA since Yvette was 8 months old, say they expect to learn as much as they may teach in their workshop. "We're here to learn, too," Jim said. "We feel very strongly about LPA, that it has been extremely helpful to all of us."

Late one evening, Pat Bilon and his friend, Walter Menning, sat at a dollar roulette table in Harrah's, socializing with other little people conventioners. Bilon, 34, also from Youngstown, is the current media star of the 25th anniversary celebration. Bilon is the little person who played the majority of E.T.'s scenes in Steven Spielberg's movie, and is reveling in the attention to-

ward him, smiling and shaking hands with well-wishers.

When he spoke of LPA and its motives, though, the talk turned serious as he described the hurts of little people. "It is trying, at times, I'll admit that. But I've gotten used to it. When we were younger, it was harder to ignore. But that's why we belong to LPA, to educate people into understanding us. To attempt to get barrier-free architecture. The average-size little person (less than 4 feet tall) is about the size of a paraplegic in a wheelchair, so all their efforts, those of the disabled, have been helpful to little people."

Bilon, at 2 feet, 10 inches, is one of the smallest LPA members. He is used to climbing on boxes and stools, he said, to reach things that other little people have no trouble with.

"Things are getting better for little people," Bilon said. "But we're doing it ourselves. We don't have enough money to buy lobbyists for our cause. We have to get out there ourselves."

Upstairs, after the teen dance for which she served as

supervisor, Ginny Brown was talking about the special problems of being a teen-age little person.

"If you're small, you don't have much of a social life unless there are other little people around," said Brown, 17, from Colorado Springs. That's why I'm looking at colleges in California, because most of the LPA population is in California. It's the biggest district."

The special problems for teen-agers, according to Brown, LPA's national teen coordinator, begin in junior high, at age 12 or 13. "People start taking an interest in the opposite sex, worry about what they wear, how they look, what people think of them. There are cliques and you feel left out. It's not an easy time," she explained.

"But it all depends on your attitude. Life can be awful if you let it be. Or you can have a positive attitude and make things better. If there is nobody to dance with, then you can still be a part of the dance by working on scenery or lights, or something."

Brown's positive attitude convinced her friend Pam Garrison, also a member of the Denver Chapter of LPA, to attend her first convention.

Please see LITTLE PEOPLE, Page 4



PHOTO BY JEAN DIXON

BIG SMILE: Marcy Mason of the Riverside Casino pins a boutonniere on Lee Kitchens of Lubbock, Texas, past president of Little People of America, holding its 25th Anniversary Convention in Reno. Story on page 1C.

1982

LITTLE PEOPLE

Continued from Third Page

"Ginny kept talking it up, but at first I didn't want to go," said Garrison, 19, a hairdresser in her hometown of Arvada. "The first time I saw a whole bunch of little people together I was shocked. My first reaction was that all these people are my height. My parents are average size. I am the only little person in our family as far back as the Mayflower. I always felt short, but not little."

Buoyed by Brown's enthusiasm and encouragement, Garrison came to Reno and admitted she was having the time of her life. She attended workshops with Brown, listened to plans for a ski trip for little people teen-agers, attended shows at casinos and danced with other little people teen-agers.

"Dancing is something that little people love to do," said Ginny Brown. "Because unless there are others around, you don't get much of a chance. Dancing, for us, is a delicacy."

The Little People Take a Giant Step

700 Note Organization's Anniversary at Weeklong Convention in Reno

By LYNN SIMROSS, *Times Staff Writer*

RENO—It seems fitting this week that the street banners and hotel and casino marquees of this gambling town in the Sierra foothills should say, Welcome Little People of America. For this is where the LPA started 25 years ago, and the little people have come back to celebrate the anniversary of the organization that brought many of them together.

In 1957, Reno, which likes to call itself "the Biggest Little City in the World," hosted 21 little people. This week, about 700 of them, their relatives and friends have jammed Harrah's Hotel, the convention headquarters, and filled the sidewalks of downtown Reno.

By Plane, Bus, Car

They came by plane, bus and car from all over the country and Canada, preteen-agers to septuagenarians. Some brought golf clubs for a tournament Thursday. Others carried jackets and heavy sweaters in anticipation of the cool weather during an evening cruise and picnic at Lake Tahoe, 1½ hours drive south. Members of the Hollywood Shorties basketball team carried a fish net filled with basketballs. They would play a celebrity game at the University of Nevada/Reno on Sunday afternoon.

Those who would be conducting workshops, programs for teenagers, preteens and parents and senior citizens brought briefcases of notes, slides and films for their presentations.

Those in charge of logistics and convention planning already had checked to see if stools were available to LPA members who needed them in their rooms. The hotel management, said one member, "has been fantastic in making accommodations for us."

Founded by Billy Barty

Harrah's has set up two three-step ramps so the conventioners could register in and check out easily. It installed rubber-tipped poles beneath each elevator button; temporary steps inside every elevator. There are extra stools for the slot machine players and a small platform has been set up at one of the craps tables for shorter players.

"We've come a long way, and we'll keep going," said actor Billy Barty, who founded the Little People of America organization while he was in Reno appearing with the Spike Jones band.

Barty, at 57, is probably the best-known little person in the country, perhaps the world, because of his

film and TV roles as an actor-comedian. (He was unable to stay the full week of the convention—it ends Friday—because of a commitment to film a segment of "Little House on the Prairie.") He has seen the LPA grow from 21 members to 3,000 in 12 districts of the United States. And similar groups have been started in Australia, New Zealand, Europe and Japan.

Before the LPA, little people had no lobby, no organized group attempting to educate bigger people in understanding just what they are all about. That they are just like everyone else, only smaller.

Little people, as any one of them will tell you, often have suffered humiliation and discrimination at the hands of bigger ones, whom they prefer to call average-size people.

The average-size people called them freaks and midgets, stared at them or tried not to look at them at all. They built a world out of reach: sinks and showers, telephone booths, elevator buttons. They excluded them from many kinds of jobs because of their size.

"We have been stomped on and everything else," said Maurice Alden of Hawthorne. "But the worst thing is that because our growth is stunted, they think our minds are, too."

Attending Since 1960

Alden, an electrical/mechanical technician at Hughes Aircraft, has been attending LPA conventions since 1960. He met his wife Marjorie at the convention in Las Vegas that year.

In the past, little people also were exploited because of their height. They were placed in circuses and sideshows, hired as leprechauns on St. Patrick's Day, given jobs as hotel pages with the billing of "special attractions." As late as the 1960s, little people were hired by the Chicago White Sox management to work as vendors in the box-seat section of its baseball stadium, with the rationale that average-size patrons could see over their heads.

But much of this is changing, thanks to the efforts of a great body of little people who make up the LPA.

"We're the smallest of the minorities, not only in stature, but numerically," said Walter Menning, an LPA member from Youngstown, Ohio. "We're only about 3,000, so for political clout, forget it. But little people do have a better chance now."

See **LITTLE PEOPLE**, Page 2

LITTLE PEOPLE: Giant Step

Continued from First Page

This type of organization has been very helpful. We're getting away from the time when if you had a dwarf in the family, you locked him in the closet."

Menning, a 70-year-old retired steelworker, joined the Little People of America in 1971, because he thought he might be of some assistance to others. "A lot of people are really bitter about the way people have treated them," he said. "When you get together and talk about it, you find you can help out. You can't live in this world with a chip on your shoulder."

LPA, says Menning, has also given a lot of little people better opportunities for jobs through education. "I think little people are getting a better chance. I graduated from high school in 1930, right in the Depression. There were all these big people out of work. Do you think they were going to hire a little person like me? I went to an amusement park and got a job guessing weights. I worked there for 11 years, before I finally got a job in a steel mill."

A survey of occupations of little people attending the Reno convention bears out Menning's words.

When Barty started the LPA, most of the original members were show business friends from the Los Angeles area. Today, only 1% of its members are in show business. More numerous among the organization's membership are accountants, social workers, secretaries, teachers, computer technicians, engineers, mechanics, shopkeepers and salespersons.

Like any other growing organization, LPA itself is undergoing change. What began largely as a social group, informally helping each other in a get-together each year, has taken on a support structure of workshops and added a medical advisory staff to its yearly agenda.

"People come to socialize, to have a reunion," Barty said. "But we also have a serious side in helping each other, with workshops on subjects like employment, dating, family planning."

Andre Boursse and Annis Arthur, both of Mountain View, Calif., have been working on the LPA workshops for almost a year, setting up various types of programs to be held, coordinating people who will conduct them.

"This is a formal mechanism for us to learn and to share," said Arthur, an equal opportunity specialist for the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Health and Human Services. "In the past, the emphasis has been on social—dancing, tours, etc. The workshops were started about five years ago and are becoming an important part. Of 3,000 members, every person has a different need. Sure, some people won't come, but there is a need for these workshops, and it has been expressed."

"What do you do when you go back to Podunk after a week here?" Boursse asked. "And you have to deal with practical stuff that happens every day. Everything in the workshops has gone on and people are willing to talk about it, to share."

Boursse, 34, has been a member of LPA since he was 11 years old. His parents, who are average-size people, heard about the organization and decided to attend. "We had fun," he said. "But there were a lot of questions I had that weren't being dealt with."

When Boursse was a youngster, little was known of dwarfism. Although it is estimated that there are more than 100,000 people in the United States who are dwarfs, only in recent years have doctors begun to do extensive research and



MARSHA TRAEGER / Los Angeles Times

Maurice and Marjorie Alden married after meeting at convention.

to categorize about 100 kinds of dwarfism. Many members of LPA participate annually in hospital studies and research projects.

The most common kind of dwarfism is called acondroplasia, in which the arm and leg bones do not grow proportionately with the body. It is an irreversible condition.

Pituitary dwarfism, a condition that causes the entire body to remain proportionately small, is caused by a lack of pituitary growth hormones during childhood. In the past few years, doctors have been able to successfully inject some pituitary dwarfs who are diagnosed early on with a human growth hormone and increase their height.

"My parents, I'm sure, found peer support, as in any organization," said Boursse. "But what we're doing now is providing structure to our experiences. The emphasis is changing just because of the input that has changed. There have been cultural changes all over the United States in 20 years. There is movement toward being an individual, but also finding a certain niche for yourself. LPA has paralleled that."

Both Arthur and Boursse, who works as human services director for an independent living center in the Bay Area, believe that members of their age group are looking at LPA as more than a social group. "We're seeing the changes," Arthur, 31, said. "Like every other organization, it evolves."

Workshops, conducted all day Tuesday, were not open to the public, or to the media. "They are only for the benefit of little people," Arthur explained.

On Sunday, Jim and Yvonne Farrington, a young average-size couple from Concord, Calif., were getting ready to conduct their upcoming workshop, aimed for all parents with preteen short-statured children. Their co-leaders were to be Len and Lenette Sawisch.

The Farringtons were a bit nervous, they admitted, because they had had in-

Please see **LITTLE PEOPLE**, Page 3



Associated Press

Ric Nicholson of Harrah's hotel-casino leads 650 little people in a cheer Friday. The Little People

of America gathered for its 25th anniversary in Reno, Nev., the biggest little city in the world.

Little people thinking big for 25th year

Associated Press

RENO, Nev. — Engineers, actors, attorneys and hundreds of others who stand no higher than a hotel reception desk gathered in Reno to celebrate the 25th year of an organization that teaches little people they too can think big.

Harrah's hotel-casino built a platform at one craps table and provided rubber-tipped wands so the 650 people who came from throughout the nation to the Little People of America convention could reach the elevator buttons.

Activities included dancing for teen-agers, softball, a basketball game and time for sightseeing at the anniversary meeting this week. And workshops on genetics, jobs, schools and clothing were planned.

"The purpose of the organization is to let little people and their parents come to grips with their short stature," said Lee Kitchens, a 52-year-old engineering manager with Texas Instruments in Lubbock and a past president of the Little People of America.

He said that by helping them accept themselves as they are, the organization seeks to let little people "move out into society and become productive, useful citizens."

Up until a quarter of a century ago, dwarfs were rejected by public schools and opportunities for jobs were limited outside circuses.

Today, little people are doctors and lawyers and members of other professions, but they are struggling to be accepted by "average" people — a word they prefer to "normal."

"Short stature does not automatically mean that we are short on brain power," Kitchens said. "It's a genetic snafu. It's no different from red hair or blue eyes."

The organization was born in Reno, the invention of actor Billy Barty, and began with about 20 members. The group now has more than 3,000 members.

"The most significant thing that a little person has to do is to be able to accept himself for his own net worth and to consider in context the statements and comments made by others," Kitchen said.

"Most of the comments you get right now as you walk down the street are from children, who are very honest; old people who are uninhibited; and the stupid and insensitive," Kitchens said.

Harrah's sought to avoid being insensitive. The hotel-casino installed ramps to the registration desk and lowered shower heads. Bob Martin, the vice president and general manager, said, "We're keeping an eye on the incidental things, like providing stools in the casino area whenever needed."

Members of the Little People are from all ethnic backgrounds and range in age from babies to people in their 70s. All are under 4-foot-10. Barty is 3-foot-9; Kitchens is 4-foot-1.

Proportioned dwarfs, incorrectly called midgets, usually are victims of malfunctioning pituitary glands, said Dr. Clair Francomano, a medical resident at Johns Hopkins Hospital trained in genetics. Most disproportioned dwarfs, who have short limbs but average-sized trunks, have achondroplasia, a failure of cartilage to form properly.

A score of medical specialists are at the hotel to counsel the little people and to study them.



AP Laserphoto

Ric Nicholson of Harrah's hotel-casino in Reno leads a "little people" cheer as some 650 people gathered in "The biggest little city in the world" for the 25th annual convention of Little People of America. The week-long conference ended Friday. The arch is a Reno landmark.

Little people think big in Reno

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"If we can make the general public aware that little people are no different from anyone else, in their wants and their hopes and their desires ..." Kitchens said, "we will have overcome most barriers — barriers actually in the observer."

Little people at Harrah's Reno

More than 600 "little people" will celebrate the 25th anniversary of Little People of America, Inc., July 25-30 at a national convention in Harrah's Reno Hotel/Casino.

Founded by actor **Billy Barty**, the organization is comprised of approximately 5,000 dwarves and midgets from all across the country.

Its purpose, explained Barty, is to help promote understanding of persons of small stature and, through fellowship, find solutions to their unique challenges.

"The convention is both a social get-together and an opportunity for learning

"We are taking every measure necessary to ensure the comfort and convenience of our guests," said **Bob Martin**, Harrah's Reno vice president and general manager. "We'll be keeping an eye on the incidental things, like providing stools in the casino areas whenever needed."

The first Little People of America convention was held in Reno in 1957 with fewer than 20 members. The more than 600 members meeting this year will participate in a wide array of activities, including sports events—rafting down the Truckee River, softball and basketball



Actor Billy Barty, founder of Little People of America, Inc., tries out a slot machine in preparation for the organization's national convention at Harrah's Reno Hotel/Casino July 25-30. In addition to gaming "concerns," the convention will address such issues as medical care, education and employment for persons of small stature.

workshops," Barty said. "We will be addressing medical, educational and employment issues as well as such varied subjects as genetics and clothing."

To accommodate the special needs of the conventioners, Harrah's is making a variety of alterations throughout the facility, including the installation of steps at the hotel front desk and casino cashiers. Boxes have been built for use in the little people's rooms, rubber-tipped wands will be available in the elevators to aid in pushing buttons, and shower heads are being adjusted.

games, a golf tournament—social events and sight-seeing.

The serious side of the organization will also be spotlighted, with business meetings and workshops for members and their families. Doctors from across the country who specialize in the problems of little people will fly in to conduct counseling sessions and give medical exams.

"The convention will concern every aspect of our lives," noted Barty, "while giving us the chance to make new friends and grow stronger—together."

12-A—LUBBOCK AVALANCHE-JOURNAL—Saturday Morning, July 31, 1982

Lubbockite Says 'Little People' Want Other People To Grow Up

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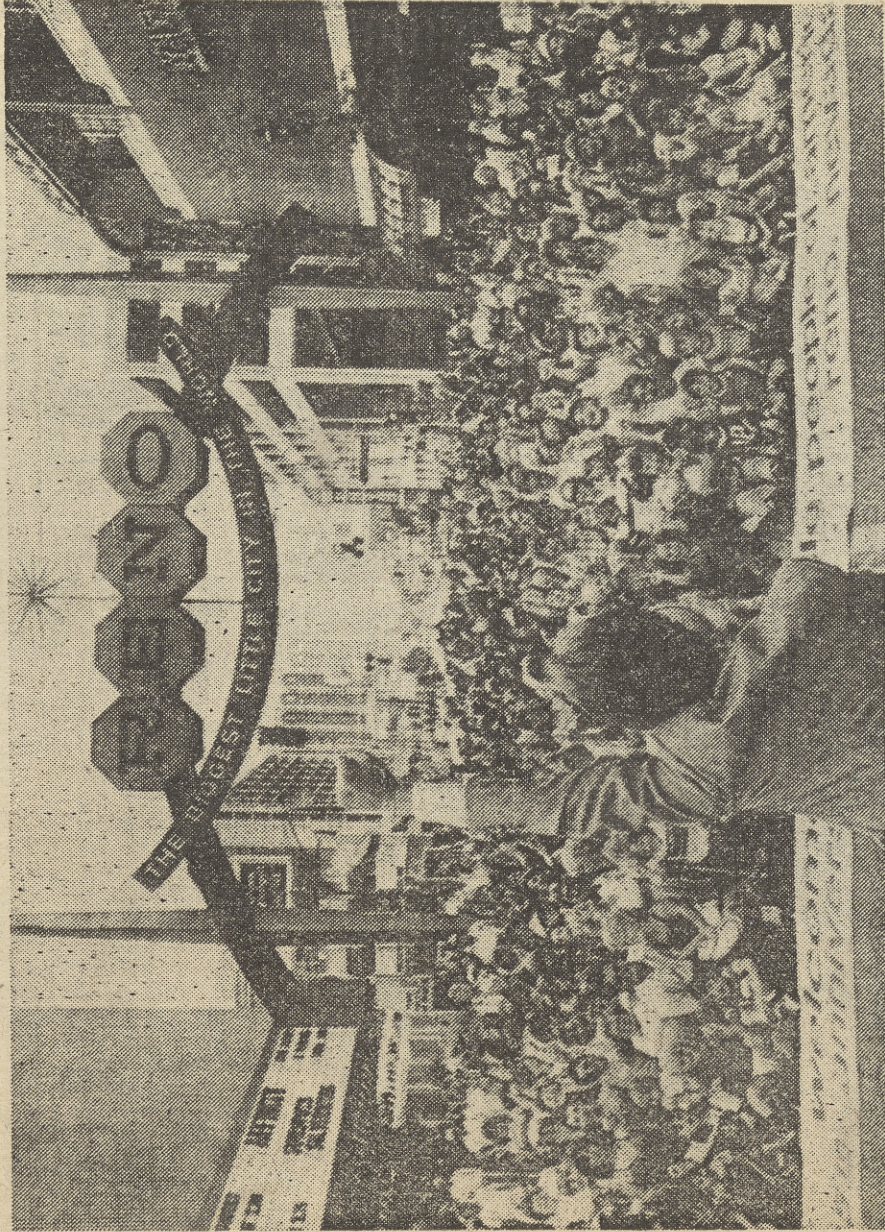
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Proportioned dwarfs, incorrectly called midgets, usually are victims of malfunctioning pituitary glands, said Dr. Clair Francomano, a medical resident at Johns Hopkins Hospital training in genetics.



BIG CHEER — Ric Nicholson of Harrah's hotel-casino leads a "Little People, Rah!" cheer as some 650 people attending the 25th anniversary of the Little People of America convention gather beneath the arch proclaiming Reno, Nev., "The Biggest Little City in the World." The week-long conference ended Friday. (AP Laserphoto)

Jackie — thought you might know him — or
give him this clipping —

Life



AP photo

Ric Nicholson of Harrah's hotel-casino leads a cheer for little people gathered in Reno, Nev.

It was no small convention

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A score of medical specialists are here to counsel the little people and to study them. A medical advisory board hopes to develop centers in various parts of the country to treat little people.

"If we can make the general public aware that little people are no different from anyone else, in their wants and their hopes and their desires ..." Kitchens said, "we will have overcome most barriers — barriers actually in the observer."

Dwarfs Not Short of Cheer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Dwarfs as a rule are well-adjusted people, despite the hindrances in daily living and taunts of others they have to endure, a new study shows.

A group of 16 adult dwarfs who underwent extensive psychiatric and psychological testing at Harbor General Hospital were found for the most part to be happy and contented.

"They have a realistic awareness of what they have to face up to," said Dr. James S. Brust. "They have developed good methods of coping with this."

He said dwarfs "were able to recognize that the key thing was the way their size affected people. They were able to develop methods of putting people at ease and making them comfortable."

Brust said dwarfs face a range of problems.

"They can't put a dime in a pay phone," he said. "They can't reach the top shelf at the supermarket. But most important are the inter-

social areas. They're teased, stared at, thought unintelligent or incapable."

Another psychiatrist who participated in the study, Dr. Charles V. Ford, said, "Whenever they walk down the hall they turn heads. You'd think they'd react to that, but they've made a remarkable adjustment. I guess it speaks for the ability of humans to make adjustments to any situation."

The third member of the survey team was Dr. David L. Rimoin, a geneticist who is head of the Short Stature Clinic at Harbor General.

The study found that the dwarfs, who averaged 4-feet-3 inches in height, "had not only learned to accept their short stature, but had even achieved a certain security in the knowledge that they were 'little people.'"

Female dwarfs were found to be better adjusted than men.

"We felt the reason for this was that the short woman is shorter than all men," said Brust. "But

the dwarfed man may be taller than the dwarf woman but he is shorter than all other women.

"The short stature in the male tends to go against society's admiration of size and strength and power."

Brust said some credit for adjustment should go to the Little People of America, a self-help group of 2,500 members founded by actor Billy Barty in 1957. Its motto is "Think Big."

"The biggest key I would say is for the parents to accept it," said Barty. "Once the parent has accepted it and treats the young person in a normal fashion the young person won't have any major problems."

Barty said he estimated that the number of little people in this country was between 5,000 and 6,000.

"It's a big gap," he said, "but there's never been a census taken."

Little People of America unite

EDITOR'S NOTE: When doctors discovered Lee Kitchens was a dwarf, his parents had nowhere to turn for help. Now, nearly 50 years later, Kitchens is one of the leading activists in efforts to make life better for "little people."

DALLAS (AP) — When sheep buyer Clay Kitchens and his wife took their 16-month-old son to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. in 1932, they learned that their child was a dwarf.

"I had a cleft palate, and they took me to get it fixed, and they got a clear understanding of it there," said Lee Kitchens, now 50.

"Take him home and treat him like you would any other child," the doctor advised the Fort Worth couple.

"That's the best advice you could give anybody, for anybody who is handicapped," said Kitchens. "Don't assume he can't do something until he's tried it several times."

Kitchens, a longtime executive for Texas Instruments, is 4 feet 1. He was president of Little People of America from 1964 to 1968. His wife, Mary, who is 3 feet 11, was LPA treasurer from 1970 to 1974.

He climbed into a chair in his motel room to talk about how he and other little people have learned to cope in a world built around the needs of bigger people.

There was no Little People of America when he was a child, said Kitchens, now engineering manager of TI's home computer division at Lubbock. "My mother said she would have given her right arm to have had something like that when I was growing up, to help her."

He recalls being in high school before he even saw another little person.

The world of little people is made up of dwarfs, who have a normal chest and trunk, but short legs and feet, and midgets, who are small, but physically well proportioned.

"The medical profession says any person under 5 feet is technically a dwarf, but most little people will top out at 4½ feet. We've got some that are quite a bit smaller than that. There are some who are only about 33 inches tall, and the smallest, I believe, is 29 inches," Kitchens said.

Most "little persons" are sensitive about the terms used to describe them. There are certain terms that Blacks



AP Laserphoto

Lee Kitchens explains some of the problems little people have in a world built around the needs of bigger people.

don't want to be called. And you don't refer to people with hearing impairments any more as deaf and dumb," he added.

"So ... little people. That's just what we are. If you call somebody a dwarf or a midget, it turns off the person that's hearing it ... And there are other terms, like 'funny little man.' Just call us little people."

Some little people furnish their homes with child furniture. But the average little couple has big friends, too, who come for visits so it isn't

practical to get furniture that is too small, he said.

"A lot of them do what we did. We got contemporary furniture, which was kind of low. Of course if you take someone 33 inches tall, they'd need a ladder to get in this chair, so they'd need to do something different. I'm two feet shorter than you, but I can live with this," Kitchens said.

He and his wife met on a blind date arranged by friends while he was an electrical engineering student at SMU and she an art student at Texas

Woman's University at Denton, 40 miles northwest of Dallas. They got married right after both graduated, 25 years ago last summer.

Little people often marry, and many of them have children.

"Whether their children also will be little depends. Some are short by heredity and some are not. The first time it happens, it's genetic, and it can be hereditary after that. The chances can be anywhere from nil to 100 percent that they'll be little," Kitchens said.

Often, little people adopt small children who had been diagnosed as little people. Kitchens and his wife did this.

"Sometimes a handicap at birth is more than parents can handle, and the children are put up for adoption. In the past, they were considered unadoptable and were made wards of the state. Now, officials have come to realize that these children can grow up in an environment where the parents understand what they're going to go through," Kitchens said.

The Kitchens' children are Sandy, now 21, and Alan, 25. Sandy is 4 feet 2, an inch taller than Kitchens and three inches taller than his wife. But Alan was a surprise. He kept growing and is now 5 feet 7.

"We had made the bathroom counters super low in the children's room, and finally we had him use the guest bathroom, which was of normal size. But still, he'd bump his head on the kitchen cabinet when he'd bend over to use the sink," Kitchens said.

Little People of America had about 400 members when he was president, in the mid-1960s, but has grown as it has gained exposure, he said. The organization now has about 3,500 members.

A highlight of the year is the annual convention, which attracted 640 little people last year at Los Angeles. The next convention is scheduled for St. Paul, Minn.

"At the first, when we had national conventions, the main attraction was a dance. It was quite a lift to walk up to somebody smaller than you and ask them for a dance," he said with a laugh.

"But we've graduated beyond just dances now. We have a lot of workshops where little people can find out how to handle some of the problems they come up against in a world made for big people."

Saturday Morning, June 26, 1982



ONE STEP AT A TIME — Delwin Crutchfield, a 14-year-old Lubbock youth suffering from a congenital bone disease, shows friends and family members that he can walk during a brief reunion Friday at Lubbock Regional Airport. Delwin and his mother, Mrs. Tom Crutchfield, right, returned from Baltimore, where the youth underwent leg-straightening surgery and rehabilitation. (Staff Photo by Bob Sigmon)

Local Teen-Ager Steps Forward To Recovery

By MARY ALICE ROBBINS
Avalanche-Journal Staff

A teen-age boy's short walk from a jet airliner to the Lubbock International Airport terminal Friday afternoon climaxed a 10-year ordeal for the youth and his family.

More than 50 well-wishers clapped and cheered as 14-year-old Delwin Crutchfield, victim of a crippling bone disease, made his way slowly down the boarding bridge. It was a moment he and his family have dreamed about for a long time.

Delwin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Crutchfield of Lubbock, returned from Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, where he underwent extensive leg-straightening surgery and rehabilitation.

The operations, performed by pediatric orthopedic surgeon Dr. Steven Kopits, apparently have been successful.

"He's on crutches right now for support," the father said. "But we expect him to walk. The therapist said he doesn't even need to come back for more therapy."

Delwin is one of two members of the Crutchfield family afflicted with the congenital bone disease called Ellis-Van Creveld syndrome. His youngest brother, 6-year-old Shannon, also has been diagnosed as having the disease.

The condition is marked by defective development of the victim's bones which eventually causes severe crippling. Crutchfield said his oldest son has had to use crutches to walk since March 1981.

However, Shannon is expected to have an easier time because doctors diagnosed his problem when he was younger. According to the father, Shannon will undergo preventive surgery, which will be much less complicated than the series of operations Delwin went through.

During his stay at Johns Hopkins, Delwin underwent 26 hours of surgery in three separate operations, beginning Jan. 18. He returned to Lubbock March 10 still encased in a body cast, and the

family spent an anxious 10 weeks waiting to find out if the operations were effective.

Delwin and his mother went back to Baltimore almost four weeks ago so he could go through a rehabilitation program.

Friends and relatives began to gather at the airport terminal 30 minutes before Delwin's flight was scheduled to arrive shortly after noon Friday. Youngsters in the crowd watched anxiously at the terminal windows to catch the first glimpse of the plane touching down.

As the plane landed, members of a youth group from First Nazarene Church unfurled a banner proclaiming, "Welcome home, Delwin."

The excitement mounted as 50 other passengers got off the plane and filed into the terminal. "Can you see him yet?" one woman asked her companion.

Then the small figure, supported by crutches, came into sight. Delwin grinned shyly as his friends shouted, "Hip, hip, hooray."

"It makes me feel good to know they care about me," he told a reporter.

Although he gave no details about his summer plans, the soft-spoken youth acknowledged his desire "to make up for lost time." He also looks forward to starting the ninth grade in the fall at Smylie Wilson Junior High.

The Crutchfields face the possibility of an operation on Shannon sometime this summer. A July 14 appointment has been scheduled for the 6-year-old at Johns Hopkins.

To assist the family with mounting medical bills and airline costs, friends have donated to a special fund in Delwin's name at Security National Bank. "I've been so grateful," Crutchfield said, noting that the contributions have helped offset some of the costs.

The father fought back tears as he greeted his son and watched him walk around the terminal. "I just want him to live a normal life, and I think he will now," he said.



NO PROBLEM WITH SHOELACES — Brendan McDonald, who at 8 is a 3-foot-2-inch dwarf, has no trouble with his shoelaces. He can reach his feet without bending his knees. Brendan's father, Harry, a mechanical engineer for the Army Corps of Engineers in Philadelphia, is also a dwarf. (AP Laserphoto)

Father, son create own small world

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Harry McDonald was born a dwarf and stands 4-feet-3-inches tall. But McDonald hasn't let his height be a handicap — and doesn't want his dwarfed son Brendan to feel handicapped either.

McDonald, 36, a mechanical engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Philadelphia, has created a world for himself and his 8-year-old son in which they know they are different, but not separate, from other people.

When McDonald and Brendan go shopping, Brendan sits in the cart to hand the food to his father, whose arms are too short to reach the bottom of the cart.

McDonald has equipped his car with pedal extensions so he can reach the accelerator and the brake. Brendan must twist his leg at an odd angle to reach his shoes, but he ties his laces without help.

McDonald's wife Carol, at 5-foot-3, towers a full foot above her husband and more than two feet above her son. The McDonalds attract their share of stares when they walk together, but Mrs. McDonald says, "My philosophy is that differences among people are obvious, and it's the sameness in people that should be looked at."

McDonald suffers from back problems associated with his dwarfism, and he knew before Brendan was born that his son might suffer from the same, genetically produced difficulties.

"Society as a whole was trained to look down on us," he says. "Now that attitude is changing a bit."



FATHER AND SON PLAYING — Harry McDonald tries to keep a ball away from his 8-year-old son Brendan as they play in a Philadelphia neighborhood playground. Both Harry

and Brendan are dwarfs, and although Brendan may grow taller than his father he will never reach 5 feet tall. (AP Laserphoto)



FAMILY OUTING — Harry McDonald, his wife Carol, and son Brendan, 8, take a stroll in a Philadelphia park. Carol is 5-feet-3-inches tall, and when she started dating Harry she

never thought it would lead to marriage. "I was not looking at him as a mate but the relationship just developed," she said. (AP Laserphoto)

State news

E.T.'s double wants down-to-earth roles

22-year-old actress wants 'big' part

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Meet E.T.

She's Tamara De Treaux, a 22-year-old actress who stands less than a yard high, weighs 40 pounds, wears blouses as dresses and sings for a living.

She said she landed a part as the stranded-on-Earth extraterrestrial in the movie "E.T." after the original E.T. was injured.

"People say, 'Hey, you're gonna be as famous as R2D2,'" she said of the robot made famous in the movie "Star Wars." "All I can think is, 'Where's R2D2 today?' I want to be hired to play a character, not a little person. I've been in the business 10 years. If it doesn't happen now, I better hang up my little shoes."

Ms. De Treaux, who has two other movies to her credit, said she played E.T. in the scenes that required movement: boarding the spaceship, fondling flowers, talking to the children. A mechanical

version was used in the close-ups.

"I just put on the suit, and it fit," she recalled. "It's very tight. Ever wrap yourself in cellophane?"

Director Steven Spielberg hired Ms. De Treaux, who lives in San Leandro, about 20 miles southeast of San Francisco, after he saw her photo in a newspaper, she said.

"My height freaked him out. He didn't know I had training," said Ms. De Treaux, who studied acting at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco.

In the film, however, acting was limited to "my cute Daffy Duck waddle. I asked to read for the voice, but they wanted it mechanical," she said.

Although she was its star, in a sense, Ms. De Treaux admits that she's only seen "E.T." twice. She likes Barbra Streisand movies better.

"I didn't make a lot of money," she said of her "E.T." role. "Who knew it'd be the all-time smash?"



Tamara De Treaux landed a part as the stranded-on-Earth extraterrestrial in the movie "E.T." She is a 22-year-old actress who stands less than a yard high, weighs 40 pounds, and sings for a living.

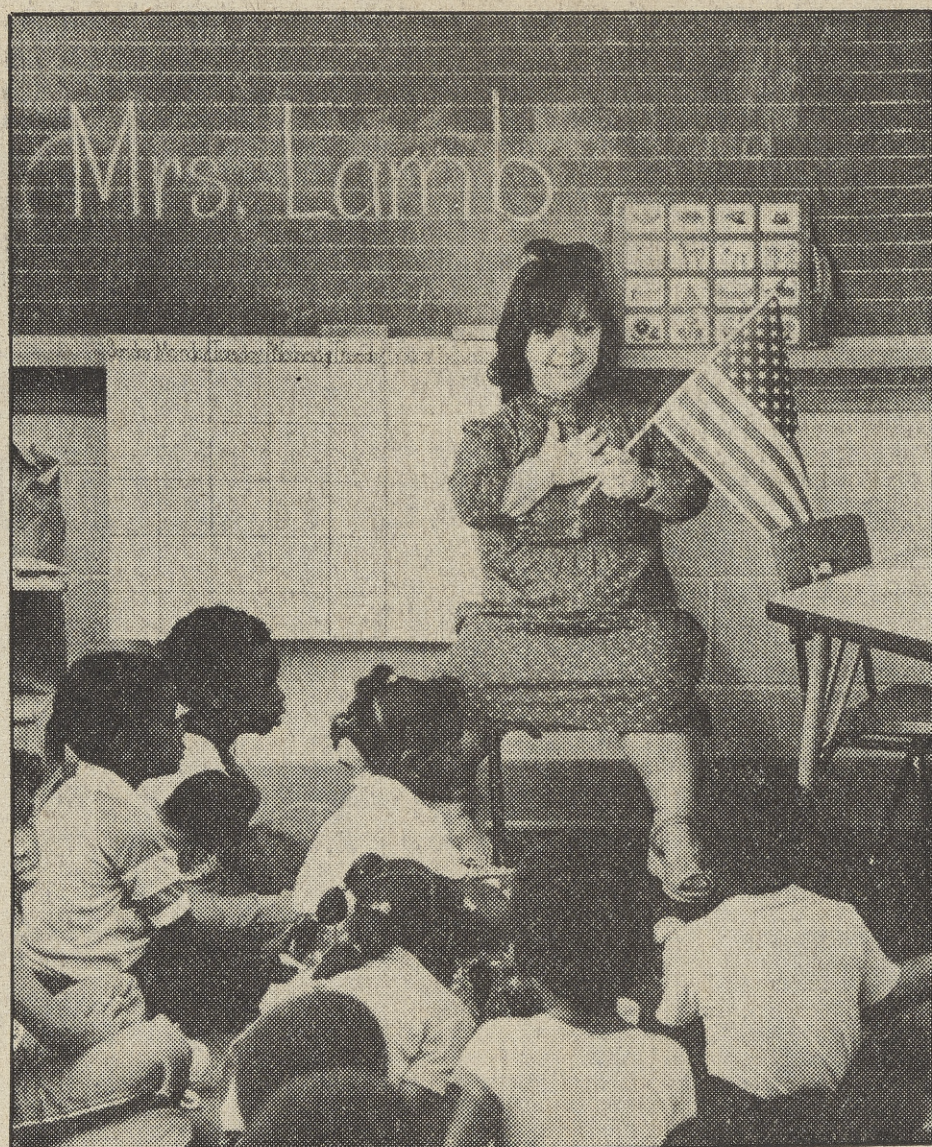
AP Laserphoto

“ Mrs. Lamb is also a little person. Isn't it nice we'll be able to do things all together at the same size?”



Lois Lamb and her kindergarten class at Elisha Pease Elementary: They see eye to eye.

School on a small scale



Lois Lamb teaches the Pledge of Allegiance to students.

DISD's first 'little person' to be a teacher is Lois Lamb

Story and photos by Randy Eli Grothe

ON THE first day of school last week, Lois Lamb was the only kindergarten teacher at Elisha Pease Elementary School who saw her students eye to eye.

"People come in all sizes, shapes and colors," the 4-foot-1 dwarf told her similar-sized class of 22 students at the South Dallas school. "When I was made by God, he decided I was going to be a little person and teach little people just like you."

Mrs. Lamb is the first dwarf (or "little person," as she prefers to be called) to be hired to teach in the Dallas Independent School District.

But for Mrs. Lamb, the only new challenge that her job presented was the district's awesome amount of paperwork. The fast-talking, energetic woman has taught 1st grade and kindergarten for the past 11 years, mainly in California. She moved to Dallas in 1979, and began teaching 1st grade in a Catholic school in Richardson. She sought a DISD position because it offered a better salary; according to district officials, she is the first dwarf to apply for a public teaching post in Dallas.

"Since I was a child, I always wanted to be a teacher," said Mrs.

See TEACHER on Page 2C.



Mrs. Lamb comforts a homesick Mark Taylor.



Lois Lamb gives bathroom instructions to kindergarteners on their first day.



The Dallas Morning News: Randy Eli Grothe

"If you're happy and you know it, then your smile will surely show it . . ." Mrs. Lamb's class sings.

Teacher Lois Lamb sees eye to eye with students

Continued from Page 1C.

Lamb. "It's very important; you're laying the groundwork of their lives."

Mrs. Lamb, 34, is vice president of the Little People of America, a social organization that promotes friendship and problem-sharing between dwarfs. The organization has more than 3,500 members nationwide.

IN HER YEARS OF teaching, Mrs. Lamb has developed almost a speech about her size that she efficiently delivers to her students during the hectic first day. Last Monday, even before the rules of the class were laid down, she spoke those often-repeated words to the class of 5-year-olds:

"My name is Mrs. Lamb — like the nice little animal. Let's talk about Mrs. Lamb right now. Do you notice anything different about Mrs. Lamb?"

"You're white," said Martin Guillory, a black youngster who already had developed a racial consciousness. Mrs. Lamb's class, in fact, is all black, and enrollment at the school is 99 percent black.

"Yes, but Mrs. Lamb is also a little person," she continued, unfazed. "And I'm married to a man who is just like me. You're going to learn that Mrs. Lamb is not a midget, but a dwarf. Just like in the story about Snow White. Isn't it nice we'll be able to do things all together at the same size? This is going to be better because I'll be more like you."

"Now, can you say that: Mrs. Lamb is a little person."

"Mrs. Lamb is a little person," the class repeated obediently.

"Everybody remember that. Am I something to be afraid of?"

"No," the kindergarten class replied in unison.

"The other teachers — and their kids, too — need to know 'midget' is a slang word," she said later. "I had to break that to the teaching staff the week before school started. We're not abnormal; we're just not average size. It's all something new in their lives and they'll be able to spread the news."

MRS. LAMB HOPES her job will help dispel myths that dwarfs can find work only in circus shows or wrestling arenas; she said little persons are moving increasingly into blue and white collar jobs. Her husband, Davey — a Dallas attorney — is now running for the Texas Legislature.

"One of the great things about Mrs. Lamb is that she's more than willing to explain about her size," said Pease principal Melvin Howe. "She wants to be accepted for what she is as a human being, and that's fantastic."

As with any first day of school, Mrs. Lamb's was not without its minor glitches. A few parents walked into her room and asked her where the teacher was, but that confusion could be attributed more to the first-day chaos rather than to her

small stature. Somebody made off with her purse when she accompanied her class to lunch; she discovered later that's a regular tragedy that befalls new teachers.

But aside from a few long looks here and there, she seemed to be accepted by everyone at the school. Only once did her dwarfism seem to shock. In the lunchroom, a boy was led out crying when he saw Mrs. Lamb.

"That poor child was petrified of me," she said. "The boy probably has never been away from his family or outside his home. I must have looked like something out of this world to him."

AS THE HOURS PASSED, Mrs. Lamb had her share of teary kids who missed their parents, children who had gotten lost when they followed friends to class, nervous children too afraid to remember their names.

The class' attention wavered at times, but her stiff admonition, "Eyes on Mrs. Lamb!" helped regain it. She read them her favorite Raggedy Ann story, explained the American flag, played "Simon Says," and took the class on a make-believe bear hunt.

Before this job, Mrs. Lamb had been out of a kindergarten classroom for a few years, and she was amazed at how literally the children took her at her word.

"Walk this way," she told them, as she directed her class toward the bathroom while walking backward. The children turned around and, like something out of a Marx Brothers movie, awkwardly began walking backward, too.

When the first day ended at 12:30 p.m., her students and the other staff members obviously were charmed by her warm ways. Later in the week, parents reported how children who reluctantly attended the first day couldn't wait to go back the second.

"Society is accepting little people more and more," said Mrs. Lamb. "You never would have found this type of work in the '60s. My being a little person shows these kids that here's someone who has met many obstacles in life and overcome them. Your size or color doesn't matter — everybody can adjust to the world they live in. And if you have a goal and want to meet it, you can."

WHEN THE DISMISSAL bell rang, children dashed through the halls, homeward bound. Some upper-class students, however, slowed to a walk and gazed curiously inside Mrs. Lamb's room. Then, while speeding away, one whispered: "Hurry up! We got to get away before that midget gets us!"

Two of Mrs. Lamb's students within earshot stood waiting for their parents to pick them up.

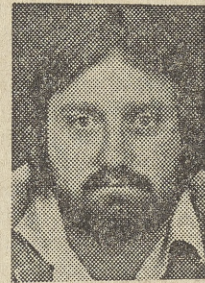
"She is a midget," said Ricky Sykes, for an instant doubtful of what his teacher had told him that morning.

"No, that's wrong," said his new friend, Sherilyn Brooks. "She's a little teacher."

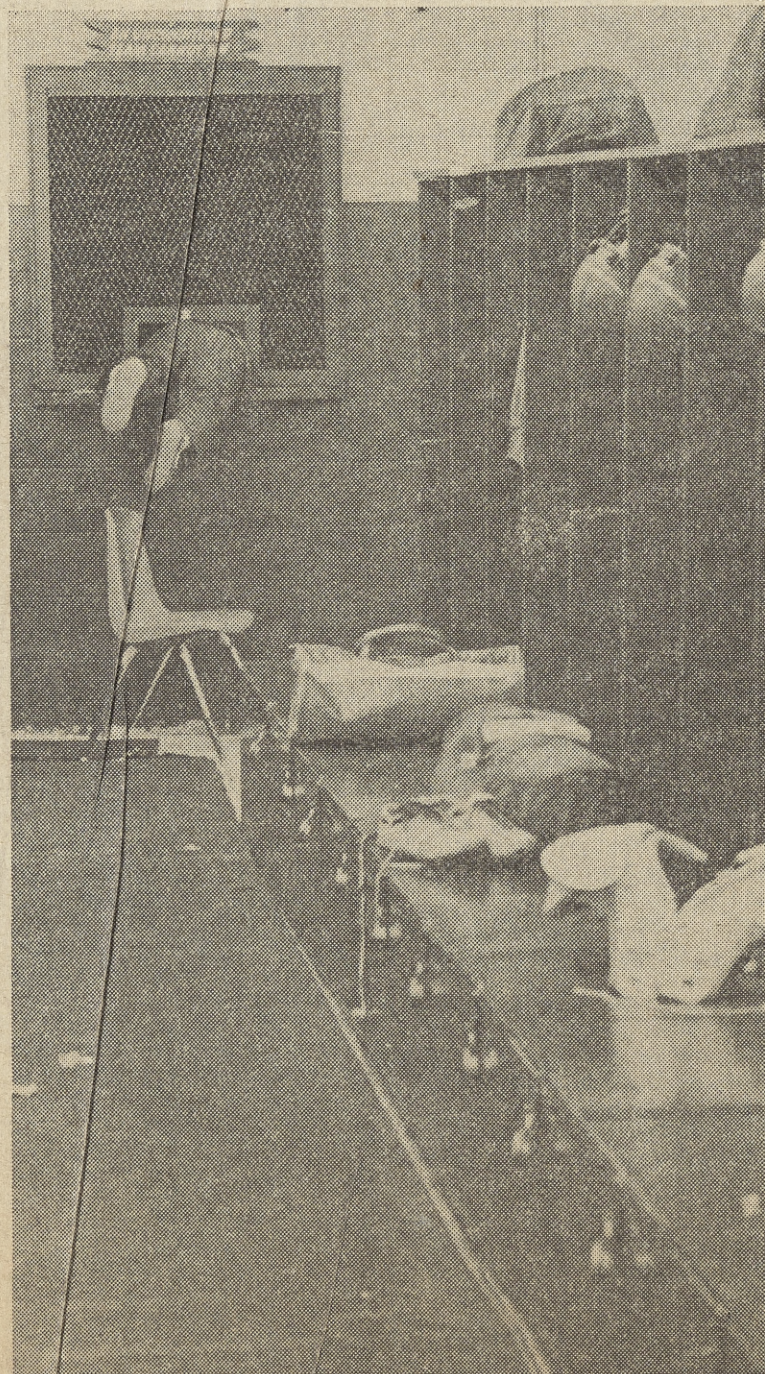
SPECTRUM

Story By
WALT McALEXANDER
LCC Public Information Director

Photos By
BOB SIGMON



SIGMON



John locks himself out of the equipment room but getting back in is no problem



'Lil John' is shown at LCC football game before sport was discontinued at school

'Lil John' Fills Big Role At LCC

LIL JOHN? AH, YES, you mean John Little, the giant of Robin Hood's Merry Band of Men in Sherwood Forest, don't you?

No, this "Lil John" lives up to this name, when one considers only physical size. But for John R. Steves III, a Lubbock Christian College sophomore from Fort Worth, size is not an accurate indicator of the personality and desire of the individual.

"Lil John," as he is known to everyone on the LCC campus, seems to be acquainted with every student and teacher and his outgoing personality is a big plus.

Although football is no longer a sport on the LCC campus, that was what brought John to Lubbock. No, he never took a snap from center, he never made a tackle or caught a pass, but for the past two falls John Steves was the No. 1 person in coach Don Carthel's camp. How? Well, quite frankly, Lil John was head manager and in charge of all the equipment, both handing it out, getting it back, washing, sorting, etc.

IT WAS QUITE A SIGHT to see John in the luggage compartment of the LCC bus on road trips, filling every

nook and cranny with a bag, so it would all fit underneath the bus.

But how could someone 4-foot-4 get interested in athletics? "It happened my freshman year in high school," the physical education major explains. "I had just moved into a new school district (Fort Worth Boswell) and the cheerleaders wanted me to do a skit. They put me in a jersey, stuffed me in a box and I jumped out during halftime.

"We did other skits and I got down on the field. But when I got down there I started noticing what was going on on the field and became interested in the guys on the field. Then the coaches

asked me to become trainer and manager and I said yes. I was head trainer and manager for three years."

One of the coaches at Boswell during that period was Don Carthel. So when Carthel landed the LCC job late in 1980, he asked John to come along as head manager. "I said 'sure,'" John recalls, "because I felt this was the only chance I had."

CURRENTLY, JOHN IS manager for the baseball team, but he finds that being a manager on the college level is much tougher than in high school. "Yes, it is a lot harder, especially time-wise. I attend all practices just in case some piece of equipment breaks and needs fixing or replacement, or someone forgets something, or just to lend support."

But does a 4-foot-4 individual feel out of place in the world of 6-foot-10 basketball players, or the 275-pound gridders? "Not really," Steves says. "I try to show people that I'm just like them. I enjoy playing around with the football players and the basketball players in their area of expertise. I know they could just run over me if they wanted, but if you're genuinely interested in others it shows and I like to think I am interested in others."

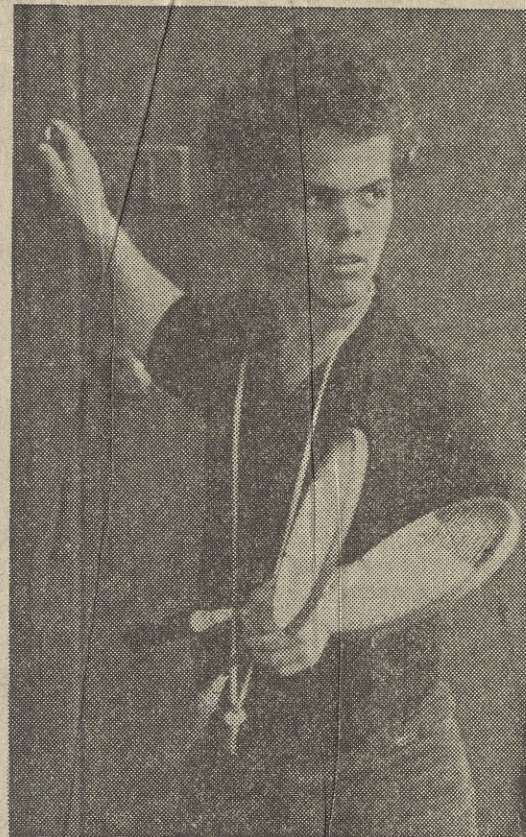
Gene McNeill, dorm supervisor at Johnson Hall agrees. "John found \$12 outside the dorm and returned it to me. I thought in this day and age that was highly unusual. It turns out that no one claimed the money and John got it anyway, but it was his willingness not just to pocket the money but try and find who it belonged to that really impressed me."

JOHN, THE MIDDLE OF three children born to the family of John R. Steves Jr., has plenty of ambition. He would eventually like to work for a pro club as a manager. And, although football is his favorite sport, he would consider any pro organization.

"I like to work with people, plus I enjoy being around sports. I also feel that as manager you can get closer to the athletes and really get to know them — not just what they feel about the job they're doing, but really get to know them inside. And that's the main reason I enjoy football best, because there's more people involved and more things to do."

And his interest in sports has carried over to the summers. His work the past two vacation periods has been as a bus boy at the Fort Worth Boat Club.

Oh, yes, one last question that everyone's bound to ask: What about his parents and family? "My older sister and younger brother are just like my parents," John says with a sly grin on his face, "They're abnormal (meaning they are "normal" size)."



John gets ready for a game of badminton during free time

Playing game of Pac Man in LCC Dorm



Doing laundry (Above) for football team last season



Carrying sports equipment to to field (left) before game

Family of dwarfs loves little pleasures of life

WICHITA FALLS, Texas (AP) — Tim and Barbara Deatherage and their children, Todd, 5, and Amanda, 2, view the world from heights not quite equal to the ordinary levels.

However, their love and concern for one another, and for life, are immense.

The Deatherages are dwarfs, "little people," Deatherage said and laughed, adding "that term is all inclusive."

The couple and their adopted Korean children, also little people, are very much involved in home, school, church and friends, in spite of a few nuisances such as not being able to reach the top shelves in the grocery store and standing on a stool to cook at the kitchen stove.

"We're not handicapped," Deatherage said. "And that's what we are teaching our children — that they can do anything that tall people can except maybe play pro football."

"The only handicap will be the lack of goals they set for themselves," said Deatherage, a certified public accountant who was born and reared in Wichita Falls and graduated from Midwestern State University.

The couple met at a convention of the Little People of America and they married in 1977.

"There are 60 types of dwarfs," Deatherage said. "Barbara and I are both achondroplastic — which means we are the most common type of dwarf, with normal trunks but short legs and arms."

girl, the same committee found Amanda. She came to the Deatherages in 1982.

"They are wonderful children," their mother said. "We're blessed."

Todd is aware that he is small people, his father said. "We feel the term 'midget' is slang and we use it in a light and joking manner, so when the

children hear it for the first time, it won't bother them.

"Todd and I play video games and I take him to play putt-putt and golf.

Those are two games he will be able to play," said Deatherage.

Mrs. Deatherage likes needlepoint and she enjoys cooking, but has to stand

on a stool to reach the stove, she said. "The kitchen is the one room I'd like to have scaled down, especially the cabinets."

Dallas has a chapter of

Little People of America, Deatherage said, "and we go sometimes. Little people are lawyers, engineers, plumbers — they are in almost every

profession. Little People also is a good place for parents of dwarfs, so they can get to know that their children are as normal as others. And as happy."

NEWS-PRESS, THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 1986 ***

NEWS-PRESS, SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 1986 ****

Firm to donate hormone for infant who would be dwarf without it

By The Associated Press

TAMPA — An infant who needs expensive growth hormone injections to grow normally will get the medicine despite a refusal by her mother's health maintenance organization to pay for it.

Genentech of San Francisco, which produces the chemical, will provide it free for as long as Katie Allen, now 2 months old, needs injections.

Without the hormone, Katie would probably be a dwarf, growing no taller than four feet.

Jeannie Allen's HMO, CIGNA Healthplan, doesn't cover such injections and twice refused to make an exception for her daughter. A rider in the policy says that only the only injection insured is for insulin. The parents said they can't afford the cost otherwise.

After learning of the child's plight, Genentech announced Thursday that the company would donate a form of the hormone developed in its laboratories.

"This is something Genentech has been committed to, that no child who needed it would be denied it because of inability to pay," said Genentech spokeswoman Susan Atkins.

The 10-pound, 2-ounce girl's pituitary gland, which

secretes the hormone, doesn't function.

The firm will give Allen supplies of protopin, a synthetic growth hormone, until the parents can find a source to pay for Katie's medication, Atkins said.

Katie will need injections weekly until she stops growing, which normally occurs at about age 18. The cost of the hormone treatment could reach as much as \$10,000 yearly.

"I couldn't believe it happened that quickly," said Allen, who works for the University of South Florida and who selected CIGNA from four HMO's offered to employees.

Katie's father, Michael Griffin, is looking for employment. He was critical of CIGNA's refusal to pay for the injections and for a special day care center that was ordered by the girl by the HMO's own doctors.

Genentech's donation was reached through the efforts of CIGNA, said the HMO's general manager, Patt Reed.

Publicity over Katie's case "certainly didn't make us look good, for a company that was trying very hard to do whatever it could," Reed said of CIGNA, which boasts some 900,000 members nationally and 42,000 in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties.

Infant doomed to life as dwarf; policy won't pay for injections

By The Associated Press

TAMPA — Two-month-old Katie Allen's body produces no hormones to make her grow. Without years of expensive injections, she'll probably be a dwarf no more than four feet tall, her mother says.

But Jeannie Allen's health-maintenance organization, CIGNA Healthplan, won't pay for the medicine, a fact a CIGNA medical executive called "regrettable."

A rider in the HMO's policy with Allen's employer states the only injectable medicine covered is insulin.

"It's regrettable. I know this is something she needs," Dr. William Rush, CIGNA's medical director in Tampa, said Tuesday.

"It was an unpleasant decision but not difficult. It is clearly stated. It is something we don't cover."

The injections will cost as much as \$5,000 a year. The cost increases as the child grows. And she'll need injections at least three times a week for about 18 years or so, until she stops growing.

"There's no way we can afford it," said Katie's father, Michael Griffin.

CIGNA Healthplan has 900,000 members nationally, and 42,000 in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties. The Florida Insurance Commissioner's office said CIGNA made a net profit of \$1,360,862 last year.

Two days after Katie's birth on April 9 at Humana Women's Hospital, the eight-pound baby was moved to intensive care. Tests revealed that her pituitary gland, which produces growth hormones, didn't function.

CIGNA is paying for two other medicines Katie needs, tablets that the child has to take daily.

The baby weighs 10 pounds, 2 ounces now, slightly below normal. Doctors say if she doesn't get growth hormones soon, she may never recover lost ground.

If she doesn't get them at all "she would deviate further and further from her peers," said Carole Knuth, physician's assistant at the University of South Florida School of Medicine. "It has tremendous psychological implications."

Rush said the company isn't likely to reverse its decision on Katie.

The baby's father works for a temporary day-labor company and has no insurance. The mother said she wouldn't be able to get insurance if she had to leave her job to stay home and care for Katie.

Little People socialize, share 'magical' week at Boston convention

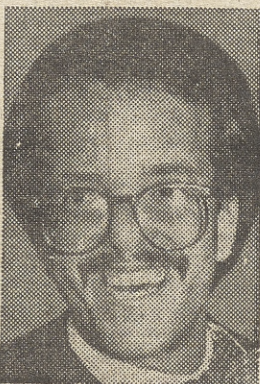
By DANA BISBEE

THEY came to Boston for their annual meeting, representing a wide range of professions and interests. The group's founder, Billy Barty, is a film actor. Other members are secretaries, accountants, scientists, and teachers. Ruth Ricker is a senior at Northeastern. Paul Miller enters the Harvard Law School this fall. Stacey Nichols portrays an Ewok in "Return of the Jedi."

The Little People of America held their 25th national convention last week at the Marriott Hotel Long Wharf. People with various forms of dwarfism and their families spent a week attending conferences and workshops. Between meetings, they did the tourist spots, played a softball game on the Boston Common, and socialized.



Ruth Ricker, a senior at Northeastern, was convention chairman.



Paul Miller demonstrated legal look in the Little People fashion show.

"This is their week out of the year," convention chairman Ruth Ricker said. "It's a very special week to see those friends you only see once a year and have a cohesiveness that's almost magical."

"There's a sharing part," Paul Miller said. "I just learn so much from everybody. It's very nice, after 51 weeks, to walk

into an environment where you are average. You can plug in, be sure of yourself, and be charged up for the rest of the year."

"It takes a lot of acceptance and courage to attend a function like this," Ricker explained. "When we're alone, we forget that we're different in



Marriott's Lee Shulman confers with actor Billy Barty, Little People founder.

the eyes of everyone else. I've been like this for 23 years; I've never seen the

world from any higher than 4 feet tall. From my perspective, my life is ordinary. So, to be seen with another Little Person, you have to admit it. You're face-to-face with it the same way the public is."

The convention also has a message for the rest of the world. "Little Peo-

ple are in middle-class America working, marrying, raising families: doing everything that they do," Ricker asserted. There are few jobs where small size is a handicap and only one percent of the LPA membership is in show business.

Albert Staples, a Boston jeweler, attended the

convention with his wife, Celeste Staples, a management analyst with the state's revenue department. Also attending were Rachel Keller of Newton, Beth Anderson of Hanson, Mary Danville of Holbrook, Casey Hubelbank of Ware, and Louise Moore of Ashland.

'LET'S GO — WE DON'T HAVE ALL DAY!'

1983



Several members of the Little People of America voice their impatience with the cameraman as they pose for a group photo-

graph on Boston's waterfront. The organization is holding its 25th annual national convention in the Hub this week. AP PHOTO

Midge the dwarf defends his right to be tossed He's a small act to follow

By Amy Wilson
Fort Lauderdale News & Sun-Sentinel

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.

HE stands tall in the world of small. The only guy on this continent — that he knows of, at least — who is professionally short and willing to be tossed for a living. And a darn good living, at that. Five, maybe six figures.

"I like what I'm doing. I know what I'm doing. And it pays."

David "Midge" Wilson stands 53 inches tall and weighs 125 pounds. For all intents and purposes, he is Australian Dwarf Tossing.

That's because the peculiar bar promotion — which consists basically of unusually large people flinging one unusually small person on usually slow bar nights — has been banned, or so they tell us, in Australia (where it started) and the other guy who was doing it in the United States was "influenced out," Midge says.

But not him. The people who want him out won't be able to scare him out or protest him out

or drag him out. In fact, he emphatically states, only the Supreme Court of the United States will ground this dwarf.

He's a citizen. He has a right to make a living, as long as it's not illegal and "it doesn't hurt nobody."

Midge takes on all comers. Except drunks. So, yes, he knows that the Little People of America are not keen on what he does, but he doesn't really care. A card-carrying member of the organization of dwarfs and midgets, Wilson says he's personally called all his friends, and not a one agonizes over his career choice.

Partner Michael Harris — average height, average weight — chimes in.

"They never sent him \$500 when he needed it."

Harris and Wilson teamed up two months ago when Harris saw Wilson being tossed in a Sarasota, Fla., bar. Harris told Wilson he had one heck of an act but that he needed a manager. Wilson agreed.

At 27, Midge has already done seven years in the carnival — not as a professional short guy but

See DWARF, Page 8F

Little people to be treated to big picnic

By Ed Levitt
The Tribune

Virginia Brown is planning a big picnic for little people today.

She expects 100 of them to bring baskets of food and gather around the Lake Merritt boat-house from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. for her "Family Fun on May Day."

Activities will include eating, boating on the lake and a coed softball game.

The picnic, she says, will be attended mostly by friends, families and members of Little People of America, a national support group for short-statured individuals 4 feet 10 inches and under.

"We just wanted to get our local chapter together — along with other little people who may arrive — and enjoy a day outdoors," says Brown, a spokesperson for the group.

The 22-year-old Piedmont woman, a graduate of Mills College, stands 3 feet 9.

"I was 6 months old when my average-size parents joined Little People of America," she says.

"My mother is 5 feet 8 inches. My father is 5 feet 9 inches. And here I came along. When parents find out their child is a dwarf, they need a little support."

"Little People of America proved a tremendous help to my parents and later for me."

The group, she says, "gave me career counseling and self-confidence. It made me realize I'm not the only little person in the world."

Brown, who works for Newsletter Unlimited in San Francisco, believes the attention she draws because of her size is



By Roy H. Williams/The Tribune

Virginia Brown has big plans for Little People of America.

"sometimes bad."

"But I can turn it around," she says. "I can make it good. I can open people's eyes and minds. I can show them we're all about the same."

It's the "fear of the unknown," she feels, that creates problems.

"I look different. But as soon as people talk to me, they find I'm just another human being. I drive. I work. I go with a boyfriend."

"That's when the staring and the pointing stops. That's when

they realize I'm just like they are."

For a long time, she notes, little people took abuse as targets of comedy. "Yet we're average people of average intelligence who live average lives," she says.

"I can't stand ignorance — such as people laughing when they see us."

"Once people get to know us," she says, "they find we're like everybody else. We even enjoy a Sunday picnic by the lake."

Lee Kitchens: An example for many, an inspiration for all

As one of approximately 50,000 "Little People" in the U.S., Lee Kitchens has proved that being disabled doesn't have to mean being at a disadvantage. In fact, Lee has even found his short stature to be an advantage at times, saying "when someone meets you, they won't forget you".

And Lee is easily remembered, having made a name for himself in city politics, civic affairs, and in the field of electronics. He is currently the Product Engineering Manager of Advanced Development, located in Staffords' Building I, and he holds patents on semiconductor devices, systems and calculators.

Lee began his career with TI 31 years ago as a co-op student at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He received his degree in electrical engineering and continued to work for TI. Lee stayed at the Dallas site until 1974 when he was transferred to Holland. From there he went to Italy in 1975, back to Dallas in 1976, and to Lubbock in 1978 - where he stayed until the close of the home computer products. In January of 1984, after 11 years in consumer products, Lee moved to Houston.

His career with TI has covered a lot of territory; and in answer to whether his short stature has ever hampered him in his career, Lee replied that "TI measures you by your performance, not your background, looks, or anything else". Lee has also discovered ways to adjust to the unavoidable problems of his

height. He has a special motorized cart which enables him to get around the building quickly, and he has found the Herman Miller furniture to be a real asset to him. "It can be easily lowered to accommodate me, and can also be raised for a wheelchair. It is adaptable to most disabilities," Lee said.

Lee's attitude and personal success has made him a key speaker for other "Little People". He is currently President of the Houston chapter of the Little People of America, as well as the President of the National LTA Foundation, which supports a scholarship program for people with short stature. He was National President from 1964-1968, and has been a Director since almost its beginning.

Lee joined the association when he first learned of it in 1960. LPA was organized in 1957 by entertainer Billy Barty to help little people and their families learn to adjust. Members are comprised of those 4 feet 10 inches, or under, in height. But according to Lee, "a little person is designated by if that person feels like a little person."

Lee's involvement in the council has enabled him to see a lot of changes in the progress of the little people. According to Lee, "The little people have come a long way over the years. It used to be assumed that the only jobs available to them were in the entertainment field, and education was discouraged. It was very unusual for anyone of short stature to be

a success in another field."

Today, with the help of state and federal legislation, there are many little people with advanced educations. They are showing that while they may be disabled, they are still able to perform many jobs. "They know they have to compete with their minds, not their hands," Lee said.

Right now the biggest problem facing them is public awareness. "Society sees a physically disabled person as less capable," Lee said. "This is ridiculous, but they need to be made aware in order to get rid of the prejudice."

Lee is doing his part in showing the competency of those with short stature. His strong interest in civic affairs has placed him on a variety of committees and boards. A few of these include: Delegate on White House Conference on Handicapped individuals - Washington D.C., Director and Vice President of United Cerebral Palsy Association - Dallas, Chairman of Texas Commission on Human Relations Task Force - Austin, Director of Easter Seal Society - Lub-



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By Bob Thomas
Associated Press writer

LOS ANGELES — Billy Barty has been fighting discrimination for most of his 61 years, and for him it has been a winning battle.

Barty is 3 feet 9 inches tall, and his acting career, which started in 1928, is at its peak. But he remains devoted to his cause, and on non-working days he can be found at the North Hollywood office of the Billy Barty Foundation for Little People.

"We've got some big things coming up: a chili cookoff, a celebrity auction and our annual Billy Barty golf tournament in Palm Springs Sept. 12-14," he reported from behind his three-foot desk. The events benefit the foundation's work in helping little people adjust to their lives and work, promoting public awareness of their problems and helping in medical and legal problems.

"Our goal is an international headquarters and a retirement home," Barty said enthusiastically.

The ebullient Barty has never been busier. He has a major role in Paramount Pictures' current fantasy, "Legend," starring Tom Cruise. He recently returned from Israel, where he appeared with Amy Irving in "Rumpelstiltskin," and he may return there for another fairy-tale film. Before that he was on stage in "Romance Language" at Los Angeles' Mark Taper Forum.

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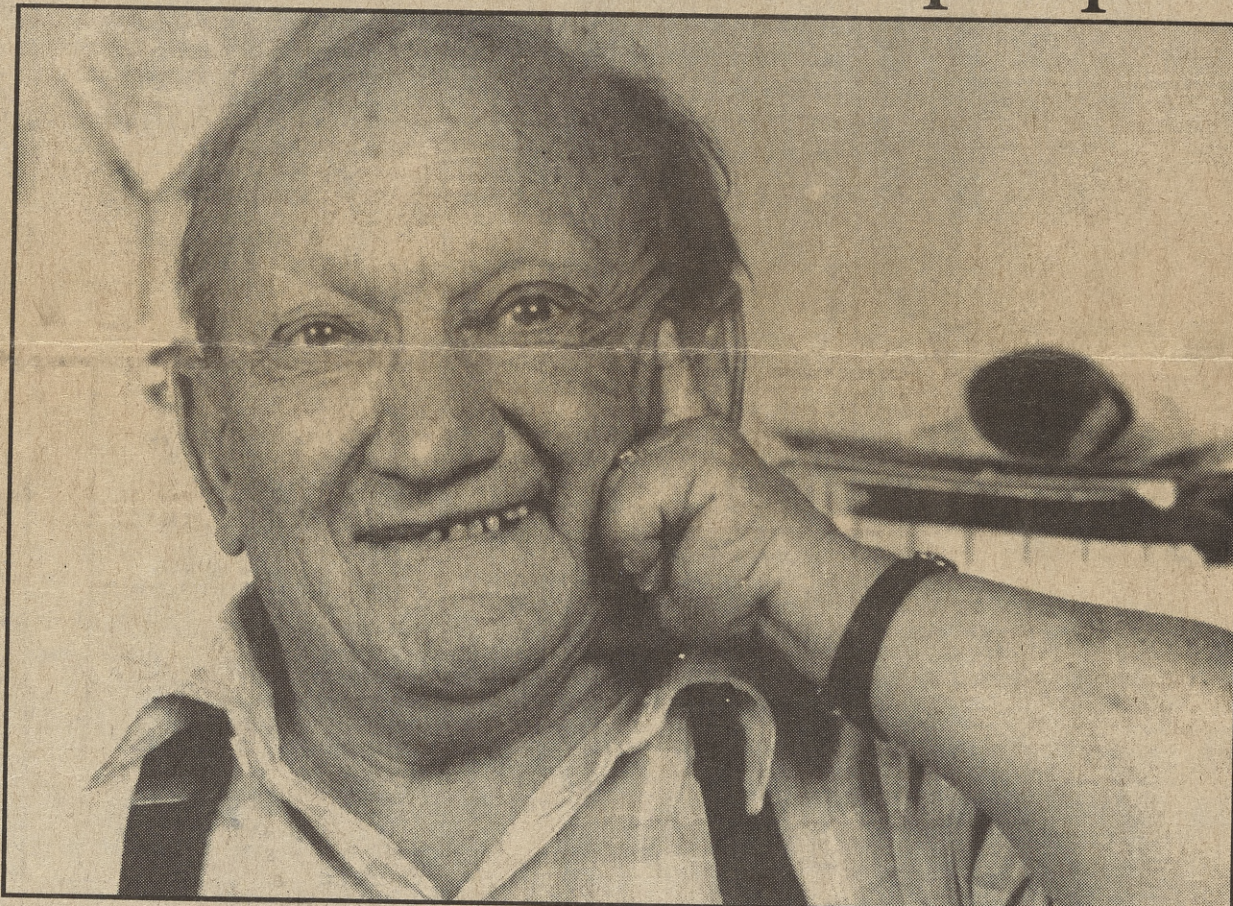
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Little People Meet

By THERESA HUMPHREY
Associated Press Writer

WILMINGTON (AP) — With new medical technology, doctors are getting a better understanding of neurological problems associated with dwarfism, a professor said Saturday during a "short stature symposium."

Dr. Ian J. Butler, a neurology professor at the University of Texas Medical School at Houston, said doctors had been concentrating on bone problems in dwarfs, "but there's some hint there may be neurological problems."

Butler was one of many speakers for a day-long gathering that included workshops on topics ranging from family planning to legal rights to creative employment search.

The symposium, which drew about 250 participants, was sponsored by the genetics department of the Alfred I. du Pont Institute, Little People of America Inc. and the Moore Clinic of Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

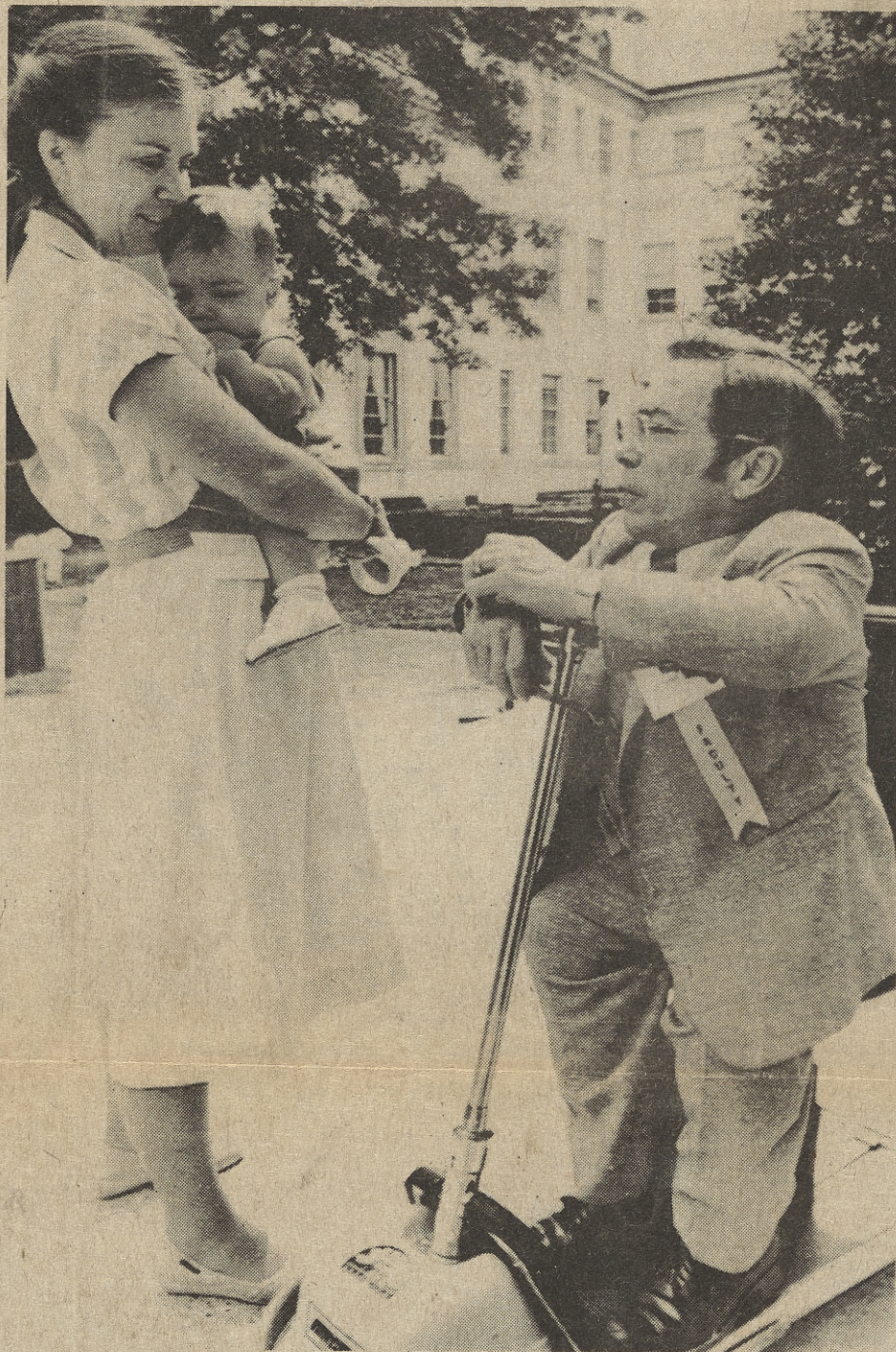
Butler also said researchers are just starting to look at respiration problems associated with dwarfism.

"We're beginning to see respiration problems in a lot more detail. We're not too sure at this stage just where the problem is localized," he said. "Problems in respiration tend to lead us to think some of the problems stem from neurological problems. It will be a year or two before we know more."

As the research continues, dwarfs, or little people, are going to become an "endangered species," according to Lee Kitchens, a former president of Little People of America.

The organization has about 5,000 members and Kitchens speculated there are about 200,000 dwarfs in the United States.

As a result, the organization, which has 33 chapters in major metropolitan areas, will soon begin a nationwide fund-raiser to



LITTLE PEOPLE. Lee Kitchens, past president of the Little Peoples Association, speaks with Mary Beth Harris of Denver. Both were in Wilmington Saturday to attend a conference at the Alfred I. du Pont Institute on "Short Stature." Harris' son, Brent, has been diagnosed as having Achondroplasia and will be a "Little Person" as an adult. (AP Laserphoto)

construct a national headquarters and hire an executive director.

Kitchens said the headquarters would also be used to house the wealth of information members have on little people to preserve "our heritage and history."

Kitchens, who is 4 feet tall, said that medically, "any adult under 5 feet tall is considered a dwarf or short person."

The LPA accepts adults

who are 4 feet 10 inches tall or shorter. The organization not only helps little people deal with their handicap, but it also helps parents of children who are dwarfs.

"Disability is kind of a funny thing. In a way, we're disabled. We're not going to grow up," Kitchens said. "The LPA is here to help the little person live with his short stature and also helps the parents."

"We want him to know that just because he is a dwarf, his future is not limited to the circus," he said.

LPA members serve as role models and the group stresses education.

Kitchens, 54, is a products engineer for Texas Instruments in Houston and he said doctors, lawyers, architects and other professionals can be found among LPA members.

World's 1st Dwarf Twins Born to Dwarf Parents — Mom's Own Story

Suzanne Was, 21, and her husband Joe, 31 — both dwarfs — made medical history when they became the parents of dwarf twins who look identical. But the threat of tragedy hung over the San Antonio, Tex., couple during Suzanne's pregnancy — she had a 1-in-4 chance of losing her babies to a deadly genetic disorder. Here, exclusively for ENQUIRER readers, 51-inch-tall Suzanne tells how she and 54-inch-tall Joe coped with the agonizing ordeal.

By SUZANNE WAS

"It's so unfair ... don't let my precious babies die," I prayed desperately as I lay in a hospital maternity ward.

My husband Joe and I are both dwarfs, and even before I became pregnant with twins last year I knew one dreadful fact: There was a good chance that any baby we had would inherit a deadly combination of genes and die shortly after birth.

"Have we unwittingly condemned our babies to death — just by wanting them so much?" I agonized.

"Don't think about it," I told myself. "Just think of the best happening. Don't worry — think about something happy." In-

I Lived in Terror — There Was a 1-in-4 Chance My Babies Would Die at Birth

side my womb, my twins stirred restlessly. They seemed anxious to be born, to meet their adoring mother and father.

They had no way of knowing the horrible truth — that they might be doomed even before their tiny lives began.

"Dear God," I begged, "please let my babies live!"

I managed a faint smile as I remembered the day 15 months earlier when Joe and I met — and fell madly in love. We were married just 17 days later, and five months after that I was pregnant with twins.

"Thank You, Lord, for making my happiness complete," I prayed — but behind my joy was a dark cloud. I knew that since both Joe and I are dwarfs, there was a 1-in-4 chance that our children would inherit both his dwarf genes and mine — a condition called "double dominance." If that happened, their lungs would almost certainly be too small. Our babies would probably die.

But we couldn't find out if they were doomed until they were born!

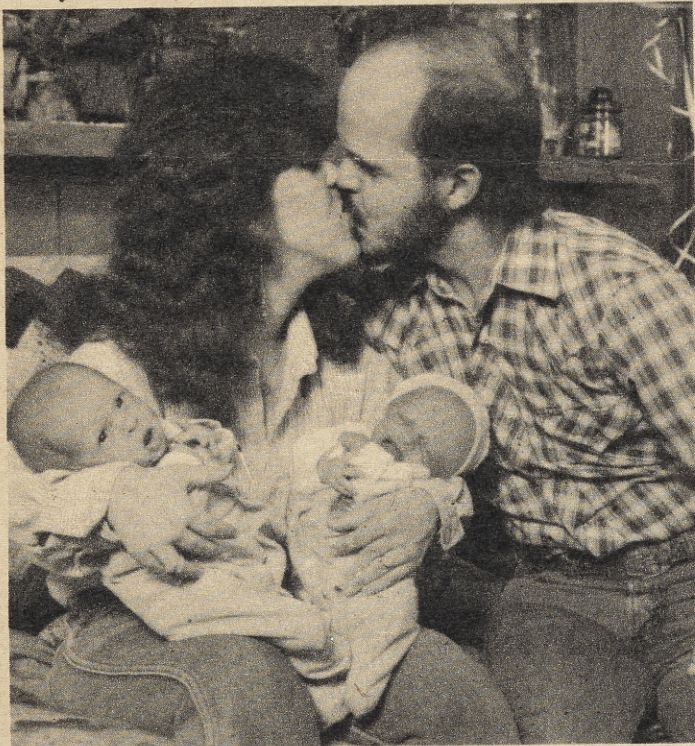
Joe was my tower of strength. Many times when he saw the tears of worry welling in my eyes, he'd take me in his arms and hold me close without a word.

"I can't wait for them to be born," I'd sob. "I can't wait to see how they're going to turn out."

Day after day I'd try to push my fears out of my



PROUD PARENTS: A supermarket worker towers over Joe and Suzanne as they show off the twins.



BUNDLES OF JOY: Joe Was Sr. kisses wife Suzanne as twins Jacob (left) and Joe squirm on mom's lap.

Their First Cries Were Music To My Ears — The Long Months Of Worry and Fear Were Over

mind — but then they'd come rushing back out of the blue, and my heart would skip a beat with dread.

My fears grew when the doctor told me our twins would be dwarfs. I checked every source I could find, and there was no record anywhere of a dwarf couple giving birth to dwarf twins.

Worry haunted me like a ghost during the long weeks that followed. I'd wake up at night terrified and sweating. Finally, on

February 7 my doctor decided to perform a cesarean.

"Please, Lord, let them be all right," I begged as I sank into a haze of anesthesia.

Suddenly I awoke to the sound of two babies yelling loudly.

The screeching sound was music to my ears.

"There's nothing wrong with those lungs!" I thought. "We've missed the double dominance!"

The long months of worry and fear were over. Our twin sons Joseph, who weighed 6 pounds 1½ ounces, and 4-pound 14½-ounce Jacob were fine!

"Thank You, Lord," I prayed as tears of joy rolled down my cheeks.

"Thank You for answering my prayers — and giving me my babies!"

It is one thing to show a man that he is in error, and another to put him in possession of the truth.

— John Locke

NATIONAL ENQUIRER

Page 47

No small matter

San Jose Mercury News, Sunday morning, March 24, 1985

Section **L**



Tom Van Dyke — Mercury News

'Big people in little packages' reshape image of inferiority

By David E. Early
Mercury News Staff Writer

'DON'T call me a midget," says Harriet Stickney. "I consider it a derogatory term."

At 4-foot-2, Stickney delivers this warning with the voice of a scowling giant. She is a pleasant,

accommodating woman with a delightfully rowdy laugh. But whenever the opportunity comes to clear up any misconceptions about her people — little people — Stickney does it with a certain gusto.

"I admit there are some days I just don't want to go outside and hear the whispers and the com-

ments. Things like, 'Look at that midget.' Or kids saying, 'Mommie, look at the little woman.' But I know the only way to change people is for us to get out there. To show people we might be small but we're also pretty terrific human beings."

Stickney is the president of the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of Little People of America Inc., a self-help organization founded in 1957 by actor Billy Barty. It is a social, psychological and medical resource center for people of short stature, commonly known as

dwarfs. It has a national membership of about 5,000. The Bay Area LPA represents about 100 dwarfs plus 100 families of dwarf children.

"In the 22 years I've been in LPA, I think we have expanded the horizons enough so many people realize we can do more than be circus entertainers and newspaper vendors," says Stickney, who lives in San Bruno with her 4-foot-6 husband, Al. "But we need people to know just because we are small doesn't mean we cannot have families, have homes, be independent,

Dawn Abbey, a 3-foot-11 senior at Yerba Buena High School in San Jose, in her specially designed 5-foot-high attic bedroom.

and hold down jobs."

Connie East, 33, is a living testament to how normal life can be for a little person. Every day she commutes on BART from her home in Hayward to San Francisco's Mount Zion Hospital, where she is a medi-

Continued on Page 2L

Little people plagued by myths and mysteries

THERE are more than 100 types of dwarfism and each is considered to be a separate disease. According to Little People of America Inc., more than 82,000 dwarfs are born each year.

Ninety percent of all dwarfs are born to parents of average size and many have siblings of average size.

Not much is known about dwarfism. It is caused by a random mutation in the cartilage genes. Some rare cases of pituitary

dwarfism can be treated with limited success using growth hormones. Last May scientists at the University of Chicago announced the discovery of the genetic defect that causes dwarfism. Still, they cautioned any treatment for dwarfism was many years away.

Many dwarfs experience frequent physical and medical problems. These include everything from sinus and eye troubles to arthritis and numerous skeletal and bone

complications. They do not necessarily have shorter life spans, but the length and quality of their lives depends upon the type of dwarfism.

There are two major types of dwarfism: ■ **Achondroplastic**, the most common type, is characterized by average-sized heads and torsos but unusually short arms and legs.

■ **Hypopituitary**, caused by malfunctioning pituitary glands that produce an insuf-

ficient amount of growth hormone, results in small men and women with average proportions.

Another type, diastrophic, is an uncommon but more troublesome form of dwarfism. Diastrophic dwarfs experience severe complications with their limbs, especially hands, legs and feet. These people usually require many years of surgery and may often still require wheelchairs or crutches.

— David E. Early

Continued from Page 1L

cal secretary. She is no more or less afraid of the crowds and the big city than anyone else.

"I was almost mugged one time," says the 4-foot-3 East matter-of-factly. "I was coming back from the bank to my job when it happened. I was able to fight the guy off and ended up biting him on the hand. He didn't get a thing."

Her husband is average size but his parents are both little people. Connie's parents and siblings were all average size, as was her first child. But in June Connie will have a baby doctors say will be a dwarf. She loves her life and says she will make sure her dwarf child will have a rich, loving life.

Size doesn't count

"Look at us as people. Don't look at our size — that is not an indication of our hearts and abilities."

However, because many people do look at their size, little people say "heightism" haunts them in tall proportions. And for dwarfs, the problems are compounded by:

- Vast employment discrimination on all levels of the work force. Little people find it difficult to become everything from waiters to managers. And now they say big companies are telling little people they don't fit the corporate image.

- Parents who pull their children away from little people when their curious children point and ask questions. By doing this, parents are tacitly telling their children something is wrong with little people.

- The notion that little people are primarily employed in side shows, circuses and as professional wrestlers. In reality, little people tend to overcompensate at work and can be found in just about all walks of life.

- The belief that dwarfs are necessarily retarded or have mental capacities equal to their physical stature. The amount of retardation is no greater in little people.

- The anxiety average-sized people have around little people. Little people say many (especially employers) feel they can't speak frankly or demand a lot of work from them. Many feel little people are easily offended or embarrassed.

Dwarf-tossing contests

Recently, little people have been vocal because of widely circulated stories about a dwarf-tossing contest in Sydney, Australia. Hefty bouncers competed to see who could throw "Wee Robbie" Randall the farthest.

The 4-foot-1 Randall says that participating in the event showed he had a sense of humor about his condition. But a spokesman for LPA says the contest was "insulting and took dwarfs back to the days when they made fools of themselves in sideshows."

Barty, in San Francisco recently to talk about LPA and life as a little person, says the contest is just another example of the kind of mistreatment that can result if ignorance about little people is allowed to flourish. He called the contest sick, dehumanizing and dangerous.

"I mean, what would stop some drunk teen-agers at a party from seeing that story and deciding that throwing a little person around might be fun," says Barty, 60, probably one of the most famous dwarfs in America. "Considering all the problems little people have

with their bones, the idea is so terrible I don't even want to discuss it."

Barty says little people meet stature-related problems every minute of every day in ways average-sized people need to understand. And, conversely, he says many little people have to face up to their condition and learn not to see themselves as ugly and unwanted and cursed.

A 17-year-old Costa Mesa dwarf committed suicide in November 1983, leaving behind a note which ended with the words: "I guess I don't love myself enough or something. I just couldn't handle the life God gave me."

Her father, Richard Crandall, a dwarf was so shaken by the incident that he started the Short Stature Foundation, which aspires to become a lobbying group for little people.

The 3-foot-9 Barty admits that when you're small life is a series of attitudes and physical barriers that must be overcome. Prejudice is tough, but so are things like telephone booths, grocery stores, hotel closets, bar stools, elevators and cafeterias.

That's why LPA wants to encourage a few physical modifications in society (there has been an increase in accessible public telephones) and earn the understanding and respect of average-sized people. Such changes could mean a great improvement in the quality of life for those Barty calls "the big people in little packages."

Little-person tricks

While puffing along on his tiny, bent legs, Barty says the Fairmont Hotel should have moved him and his entourage out of rooms on the 19th floor and "12 miles from the lobby." The button in the elevator for the 19th floor was higher than six feet.

"The bell boy asked me what these were for," says Barty, fingering a package of unsharpened pencils he ordered from room service. "We use the eraser to push the buttons on the elevator because it's mushy like a finger. When you're a little person, learning something like that is very important." But even his pencil wouldn't reach the 19th-floor button.

Inside his closet at the Fairmont, Barty displayed another little-person trick. His tiny, custom-made clothes were on wire hangers he specially requested from the hotel. Those hangers were hung on the bottom of the closet's regular hangers and therefore within his reach.

Modification is a way of life for little people. Specially tailored clothes and shoes can be ordered from firms in Hong Kong. And it is not unusual for little people to redesign their homes. The Stickneys' kitchen, for example, has lower counters so Harriet and Al can cook and wash dishes with ease.

Dawn Abbey, 18, a senior at Yerba Buena High School in San Jose, has a bedroom in the attic of her parents' home. The 5-foot-high room has custom-fit shelves and closets. There is a small mirror and sink, a chair and a twin bed. Beneath the skylight is a fluffy menagerie of stuffed animals.

"I've been up here for 3½ years now, and even though there are two extra bedrooms downstairs, I like this room because it was specially designed for me and I'm comfortable here," says the 3-foot-11 Abbey, who drives her own 1979 Honda with the help of pedal extensions.

Abbey agrees with Barty's bro-

snort, plump fingers and their waddling walks.

Later, their unique size earns them a certain popular notoriety. Classmates are very friendly and genuinely protective. No one dares pick on them and they become the best-known person at school.

Although this popularity continues, another barrier is erected when it's time for dancing and dating.

"I have lots of friends, but sometimes it's hard seeing my friends going out on dates while I head on home," says Abbey. "When I want to talk about it I go to my parents or other little people I meet at LPA meetings. Those are the only people who really understand how I feel."

Difficult time

Adolescence is perhaps the most difficult time in little people's lives because it is a time that forces them to face up to their condition.

Andre Boursse, an affirmative-action officer for the Santa Clara County Transportation Agency, remembers that when he was in high school he thought he could make people forget his condition by succeeding on the gymnastics team.

"I figured I'd be a jock and that would be my key to fame, fortune, wine, women and song," says Boursse. He practiced every day on the still rings and ultimately won a state championship.

But when the bleachers cleared and no fawning cheerleaders fell before his 4-foot-6-inch frame, Boursse was devastated. He realized real success with people would be earned if he became someone respected for his humor, personality, intellect and ability.

"If you feel bad about yourself it will come out and others will pick up on it and shy away from you," says Boursse, 36. "And if parents of a little person feel bad about themselves and their child, that attitude will come out and have an effect on the kid."

Stephanie's story

Perhaps that's why Trish Mayhugh of Livermore fought so hard to get her 7-year-old daughter, Stephanie, into public school. Mayhugh says she is proud of her little person and wants the whole world to know.

The school district feared for the girl because she has seckle syndrome, a form of dwarfism that makes her extremely tiny. There are only five other known cases.

At age 7, Stephanie is 26½ inches tall (about four inches longer than this news page) and weighs 12½ pounds. Her palms are the size of postage stamps. Her voice is a happy, high-pitched squeak.

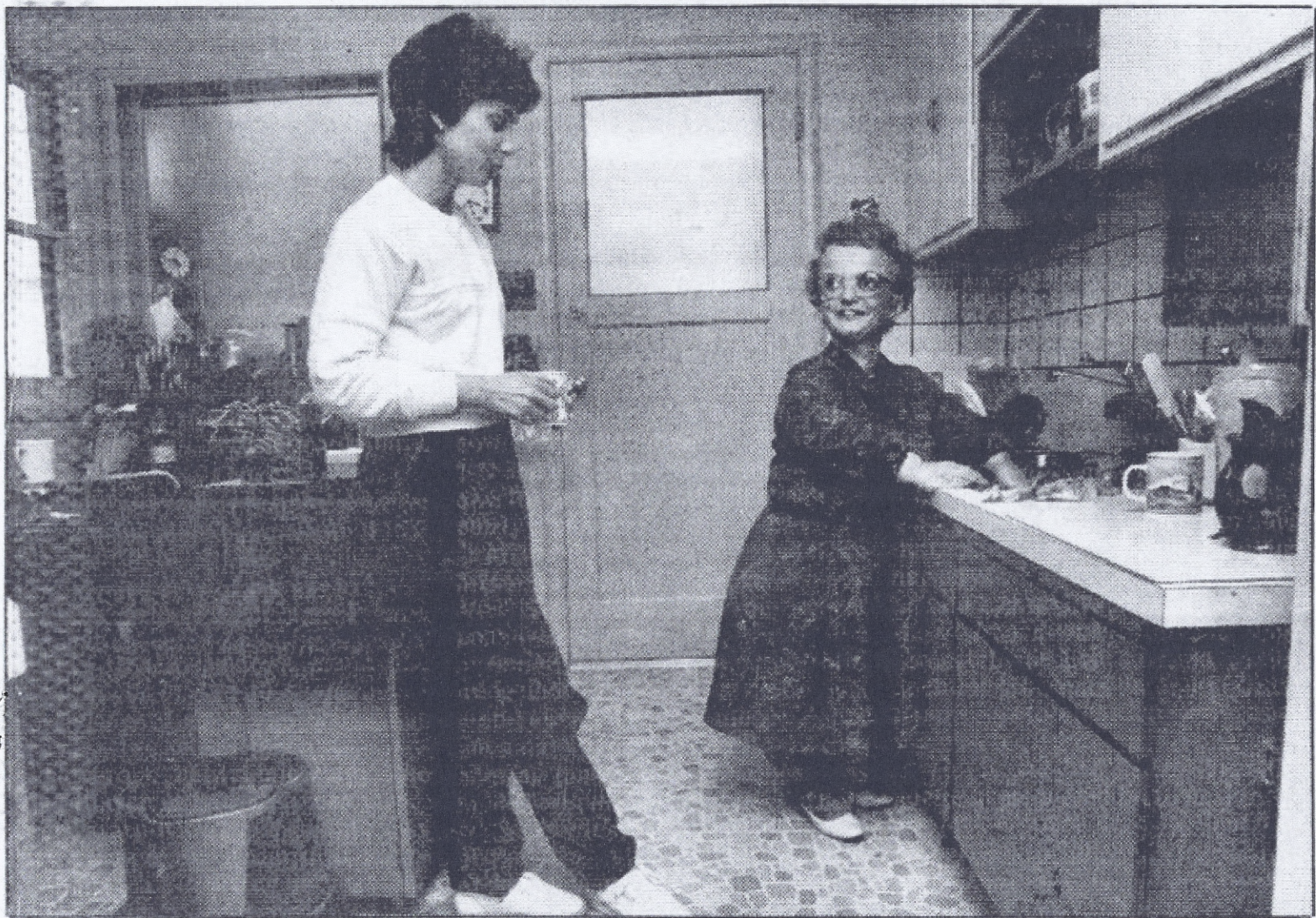
She looks like a perfectly proportioned doll that moves. When amazed gawkers call her a baby, Stephanie pipes up and proclaims, "I'm not a baby, I'm just a dwarf."

By the time her non-dwarf baby brother was 6 months old, he was too big for her to hold, says her mother. When Stephanie's father said, "Sorry, honey. You can't hold him because he is bigger than you are," Stephanie ran to her room and cried.

Still, today the child doctors said would be a vegetable attends first grade, wears her own tiny eyeglasses, sits in her own tiny desk and does school work from a tiny black board near her seat to accommodate her poor vision and her size.

"The thing I would tell anyone who has a dwarf child is to love that child and to keep on asking questions," says Mayhugh. "Sta-

Setting the



Cap Carpenter — Mercury News

Harriet Stickney (right) and her neighbor, Chris Schindler, chat in the Stickneys' kitchen, remodeled to fit the Stickneys' smaller proportions.

Little People make up for size with big hearts

City life can be a struggle for Houston-area dwarfs, though

By MEGAN CLARK
Post Reporter

Lee Kitchens doesn't go to the ballpark any more.

He doesn't like crowds and he can see more of the action on television.

"Get down on your knees and see how things look from my perspective," advises Kitchens, a 55-year-old engineer with Texas Instruments.

Kitchens is 4 feet tall.

He is a dwarf — one of 111 Houston-area members of Little People of America.

Midget is the wrong word to use when referring to a dwarf. It's a fantasy term made up by P.T. Barnum to advertise Tom Thumb, says Kitchens. It's a term of derision.

And most dwarfs aren't wrestlers or members of the circus, explains Colleen Newman, a Deer Park resident and LPA member who grew up in a family of normal-sized adults. Newman is 4 feet 4.

Over the years Kitchens has seen LPA redirect its energies from an organization that sought half-price transportation tickets and other discounts, which Kitchens contends was "preposterous," to current LPA goals which focus on the social aspects of getting together and meeting with others who share the same handicap.

Stature not everything

Many normal-sized adults belong to Houston's LPA chapter because they have children who are dwarfs.

"Just because you're of short stature doesn't mean you're short between the ears," explains Kitchens. "Little people have a little more of a struggle, because of artificial barriers put in our path by society — mostly attitudinal and architectural."

Big city life for a person of short stature can be a struggle. Water fountains and public telephones are usually out of reach. Seemingly simple tasks such as putting coins in coin-operated washing machines is just about impossible. And using a self-service gas station is pretty much out of the question.

Children follow you around in stores. Comments about being cute are irritating. Crowds intimidating.

In all, there are about 100 different kinds of dwarfism. Probably the most common form is achondroplasia, characterized by short limbs.

The medical community considers any adult under 4 foot 6 a dwarf. The maximum height for membership in LPA is 4 feet 10 inches.

Houston's Little People are engineers, lawyers, welders, store managers, secretaries and teachers. However, certain careers aren't practical for a little person, such as work as a fireman or police officer, doctor or nurse.

According to Dr. William Horton, a geneticist at Shriners Hospital For Crippled Children in the Texas Medical Center, many conditions of dwarfism are inherited. Since a dwarf's bones don't grow properly, they're substantially below normal height.

Normal parents common

Most children with achondroplasia are born to perfectly normal parents. Horton says that dwarfism is due to a mutation in the gene.

In cases where the parents are both dwarfs, there's a 50 percent chance the baby will inherit the parent's type of dwarfism, a 25 percent chance the baby will be of normal stature and a 25 percent chance the child will get an achondroplasia gene from each parent, which is known as a "double dose," often fatal.

Just because you're small doesn't mean you have to drive a small car and live in a tiny house.

For example, Kitchens prefers his big white Cadillac to a subcompact car. With installed extensions, Kitchens is able to drive any car. He even carries an extra pair of extensions in his brief case when he travels so he can drive rental cars.

Newman, 33, the mother of two adopted "little-littles," used to drive a big pickup truck and a Cadillac. That was when she was married to her first husband, who was under 4 feet.

She and her ex-husband lived in a large, three-bedroom house with regular-sized furniture, and even had two Saint Bernard dogs.

Things have changed though since she mar-

ried her second husband, Victor, who is 6 foot 1. They have what is called "a mixed marriage".

"The public noticed me more with my little husband," says Newman. "They used to say how cute we were ... a pair made for each other."

Marrying a person much taller has made life easier for Newman. Grocery shopping, house-keeping chores and child care are more manageable.

Newman herself suffers from a bad back and neurological problems related to her particular type of dwarfism. Most dwarfs have orthopedic disorders of one sort or another, since bones don't grow properly — leading to joint and ligament problems.

Other more severe cases of dwarfism can cause hearing or eye problems, immunological disorders and kidney problems.

Newman's 4-year-old daughter, Christal, only learned to walk a year ago. The girl already has undergone 14 operations on her legs, hips and feet.

Her son, Christopher, 8, will probably have to undergo orthopedic surgery when he is older.

For now, the third-grader is learning to cope with his physical handicap. Because he is so small, larger children pull him along in a wagon instead of a wheelchair when he goes on class trips.

Humorous side to it

A footstool helps him reach his desk and the school water fountain.

Learning to cope with people who compare size to intelligence will come later.

Newman is still angered by store clerks who ignore her because they're embarrassed they'll say the wrong thing or make the wrong gesture. Invariably, if Newman is with a taller friend, she says the cashier will assume the friend is paying for the purchase.

But there's a humorous side to being small. Kitchens recalls the day a small girl asked his late wife, who weighed only 60 pounds, if she was real or a puppet.

"We share the same desires and ambitions, frustrations and disappointments, happiness and sadness, as everyone else," says Kitchens.



Post photo by King Chou Wong

Colleen Newman with her husband, Victor, and her children, 8-year-old Christopher and 4-year-old Christal.

Lab owner lands role as an 'Ewok'

By Catherine Schutz
Special to The Tribune

RICHMOND — It must have been quite a sight.

It was the final casting call at the Lucas film studios in San Rafael for the two primary fantasy creatures — the enormous Marauders and the pint-size Ewoks — that will populate George Lucas' new, as yet unnamed, TV movie.

"We were saying that if you were under 6-foot-5, you're too short and if you were over 4-foot-3, you were too tall," recalled producer Tom Smith.

Among those lucky ones to make the cut — at the short end of the scale — was Richmond resident Mike Lipsky, who stands 4 feet 2 in his foam and fur Ewok feet.

Lipsky, 41, has not exactly been hanging around Hollywood drugstores waiting to be discovered.

The owner of a successful dental laboratory here, Lipsky's acting experience consisted of jumping out from behind a curtain as a cigar-smoking dragon in a production of Stan Freberg's "St. George and the Dragonet" at St. Mary's High School in Berkeley, some 20 years ago.

Somebody at the Lucas studios knew somebody who knew him, and in late April, Lipsky got a phone call from the casting director inviting him to an audition.

"They wanted to see how mobile I was," he said. "They had us walk, run and jump on a mat, and respond to commands like 'come here,' and 'stop,' while wearing the costume."

Because the actors are completely masked, they must convey their thoughts and emotions through body language.

"The Ewok characters are de-

fined by pantomime," said Smith. "We were looking for people who moved in interesting ways."

The studio eventually cast about 20 Ewok players. One group of 10, including Lipsky, appears in all the Ewok sequences. The rest were called in for crowd scenes.

Being an Ewok is hot work, Lipsky said. The actors wear layers of costume. The first is what he called cotton "kiddie pajamas with feet in them." Next comes 2-inch-thick foam rubber padding on the legs, arms and torso to give the characters the proper chubbiness.

The fur suit goes over the padding, with feet and hands attached separately. The head with its leather hood goes on last.

"It's like a sauna inside the costume," Lipsky said.

When preparing for a scene, the Ewoks stand with their heads tucked underneath their arms receiving their instructions. Then comes the cry of "Heads on!" and the actors scurry into place so shooting can begin.

Lipsky spent most of June in Marin County filming the Ewok sequences, sometimes working six days a week.

His work consisted of a lot of action, running around, falling, "getting into fights with the bad guys," he said, but added, "None of us gets shot."

Bay Area dancer Wendy Rogers choreographed the Ewok movements, and also coached the Marauders who, standing well over 6½ feet, had other movement problems to overcome.

Lipsky admits that picking him out of the crowd may not be easy. Ewoks look pretty much alike.



The teddy bear-like creatures made their debut in "Return of the Jedi," Lucas' third "Star Wars" movie.

In interviews about the "Star Wars" saga, Lucas has said he always had a creature of goodness and ingenuity in mind for his story, but the Ewok did not materialize until the third film.

"When we started 'Return of the Jedi,' George knew exactly that he wanted the Ewoks in it," said Smith, who was formerly general manager of Industrial Light and Magic, Lucas' special effects wizards.

"We wanted a character that would be very cute, but could be industrious as well."

Without revealing plot specifics, Smith said the new movie will focus on the adventures of the Ewok, Wicket, and Cindel, the little girl who appeared in last year's TV movie, "The Ewok Adventure." The new film has much more action than the first one, he said.

Wicket is played by Warwick

Davis, the 16-year-old English actor who played the creature in "Jedi" and "The Ewok Adventure." Aubrey Miller returns as Cindel.

There's also an evil witch, played by Sean Phillips, and two new fantasy creatures — the huge Marauders, led by a Marauder King, and Teek, described by a studio publicist as a lovable and feisty pet that belongs to a lovable and feisty old man, played by Will Brimley.

The movie is scheduled for release around Thanksgiving on ABC.

Although he lacks acting experience, Lipsky is no novice performer. He started playing drums in his teens and supported himself in the early 1960s as a drummer.

He played at the Continental Club in Oakland, backing up local blues singers and playing between groups like the Temptations and Martha and the Vandellas.

He toured with Joe Tex and

has played in San Francisco topless clubs, an experience he described as "a little different."

He trained to be a welder through Laney College, but went to work in a dental laboratory in San Francisco, then quit to play drums full time.

When the music business slowed down, he went back to the dental lab and later opened his own lab with his first wife.

He has operated the lab, which prepares crowns and bridges, by himself for 10 years.

He continued to play drums and met his present wife, Debby, a singer, when he played with her band, Swiftwater.

Their son, Adam, a normal-size 6-year-old, is proud of his Ewok T-shirt that bears the message, "Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the forest."

During filming, Lipsky did his lab work at night. His wife and parents, Donald and Elizabeth Lipsky of Kensington, pitched in

Mike Lipsky, far left, plays role of an 'Ewok' in upcoming George Lucas film for television special. Below, Lipsky at home in Richmond.



By Roy H. Williams/The Tribune

with pickups and deliveries.

Lipsky says that being a dwarf has not interfered with his life. He has raced boats and cars and is building a drag racer in his garage that he hopes will be ready to race in a year.

"Being short hasn't bothered me at all," he said. "This time (the Ewok movie) I took advantage of it. Being short is why they used me."

He declined to reveal how much he was paid for his work, but added, "I did it for the fun of it — the smell of the greasepaint."

And there have been some interesting fringe benefits, like attending the Fourth of July picnic that Lucas threw for his employees and friends.

Michael Jackson was among the guests.

"His bodyguard motioned me over and introduced me," Lipsky said. "I shook his hand and said, 'My name is Mike, too.' He seemed like a pretty nice guy."

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1985

Movie lets small man make it big

At 4'2", he's perfect to play a cute, furry Ewok of Endor

By Kerry Hamill
Times staff writer

RICHMOND — Mike Lipsky wasn't discovered on a soda fountain stool or because some director noticed his face on the cover of Gentleman's Quarterly magazine. Casting directors called looking for him one morning as he was having breakfast in his Richmond kitchen.

He wasn't called for his face or his talent. Rather, for the first time in his life, Lipsky's size got him a break.

"Are you 4 foot 2 inches tall?" Lipsky said the stranger at the other end of the receiver asked.

"I answered yes, and she set up an appointment for a screen test," he said.

Lipsky, 42, was cast as a pint-sized Ewok in the latest George Lucas fantasy film after two days of testing convinced directors he could effectively express himself through body language. His role as one of 20 lovable and sympathetic characters, who attack giant marauders on the planet Endor, required a layered, furry costume and the physical agility to jump, roll and express complex emotions without words.

Casting directors in "Ewoks: The Battle for Endor," scouted talent by size, said producer Tom Smith. They sought dwarfs and basketball players to face one another in elaborate costumes as the tiny, innocent Ewoks attacked by ugly giants who invade their Endor home.

"Basically, we spent two days running around in this heavy costume, acting mean and holding weapons for the choreographers during the audition," said Lipsky. "If you just sit there idle, you look like a dummy and they can get that from a mannequin. Every moment you had to look alive."

The offer to film a movie appealed to Lipsky's combined sense of art and adventure, and he ac-

cepted the job, which pays \$75 per day plus overtime.

The directors appreciated his energy, and Lipsky ended up in more scenes than any other Ewok. He was even given a solo scene, although he will not be recognized under his costume.

The final product may be fantasy and adventure, but the filming process was definitely real life, said Lipsky.

Through the shooting months of June and July, he donned a suffocating costume while filming on the Lucas Ranch production set in the sweltering northern Marin County heat. After filming days that often ran for 12 hours, Lipsky raced home to maintain his own business as a dental technician who molds bridges and crowns for the patients of East Bay dentists.

"I couldn't do this again for any period of time," said Lipsky, a homeowner and father of a 6-year-old boy. "I'm not 20 years old anymore and I have responsibilities. This film was tough on my business."

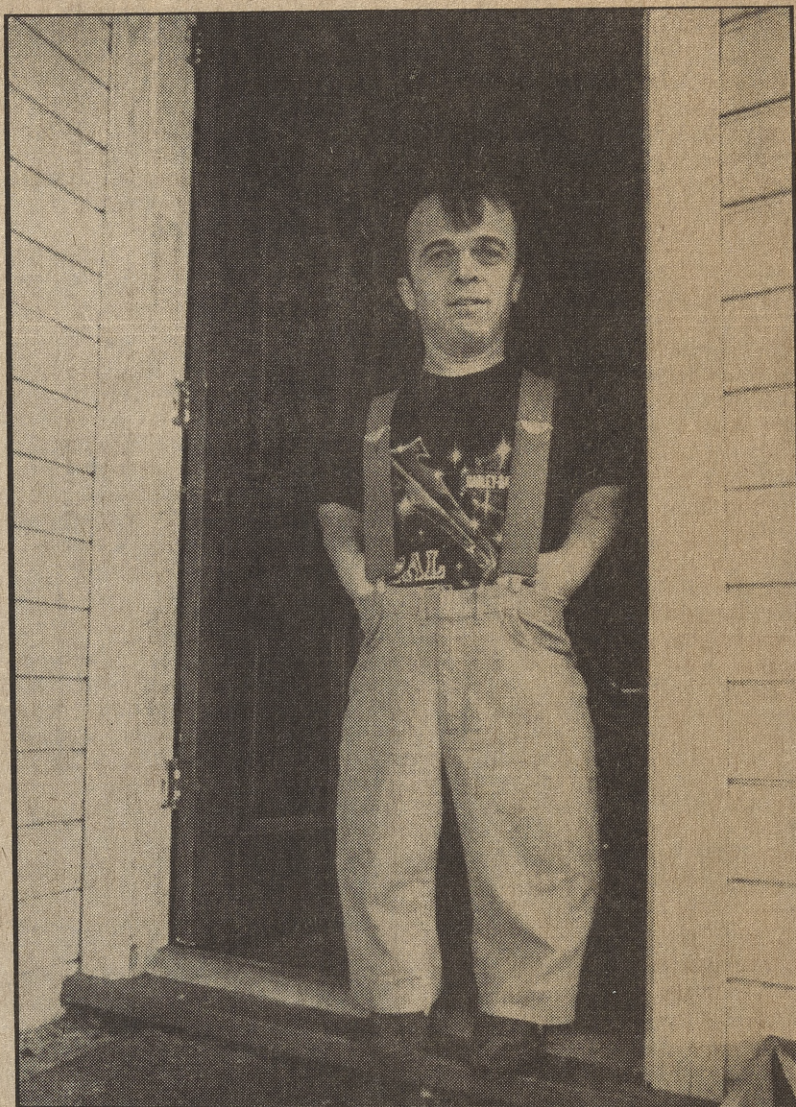
The made-for-television movie will air on ABC Nov. 24 at 8 p.m. Lipsky said he will gather his son, Adam, and a group of close friends to watch the movie so he can point himself out among the groups of Ewoks in most scenes.

"I have to say, it sure was a lot more fun than making teeth," he said.

Before the Lucas film, Lipsky's only acting experience was jumping from behind a curtain as a cigar-smoking dragon in a production of "St. George and the Dragon," while attending St. Mary's High School in Berkeley more than 20 years earlier.

Since the filming concluded, Lipsky refused another film role and does not anticipate that he will act in a movie again. He did accept a modeling job that was much easier and far more lucrative financially, he said.

Lipsky is a former drummer



Times photo/David Toerge

SIZE AND AGILITY helped Mike Lipsky land a role as an Ewok in an upcoming television movie.

who backed up Joe Tex, the Temptations, Little Richard and Bobby Freeman during a string of gigs in the 1960s and 1970s.

The drumsticks were retired when Lipsky married and had a son.

Lipsky is also a former winning race car driver, and is currently building a drag racer in his garage. He is looking for a sponsor and hopes the car will be ready for racing next year.

All his life, Lipsky said he never expected to be treated different-

ly because of his size. Since childhood, he always socialized with average-sized people and led a normal life.

He remembers that as a child he attended a support group for dwarfs and midgets, called Little People of America, and he was shocked at how other little people looked, he said.

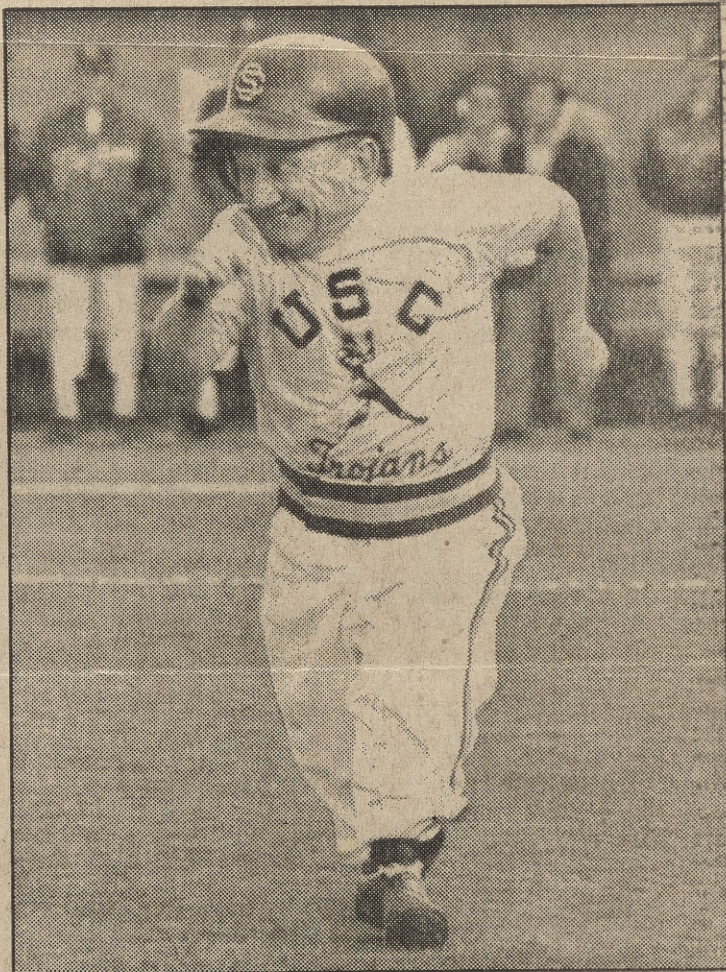
"It was a rather startling experience," he said. "I had not been around people my own size all my life, and it was like looking in a mirror."

Profile



Mercury News Library

Actor Billy Barty, seen in a celebrity baseball game at right, plays Screwball in "Legend," above left. With him is Cork Hubbert as Brown Tom.



Tiny actor is a legend in his time

By Bob Thomas
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES

BILLY BARTY has been fighting discrimination for most of his 61 years, and for him it has been a winning battle.

Barty is 3 feet 9 inches tall, and his acting career, which started in 1928, is at its peak. But when he's not working, he can be found at the North Hollywood office of the Billy Barty Foundation for Little People.

"We've got some big things coming up: a chili cook-off, a celebrity auction and our annual Billy Barty golf tournament in Palm Springs," he said. The events benefit the foundation's work in helping little people adjust to their lives and promoting public awareness of their problems.

"Our goal is an international headquarters and a retirement home," Barty said.

The ebullient Barty has never been busier. He has a major role in Paramount Pictures' fantasy, "Legend," starring Tom Cruise. He recently returned from Israel, where he appeared with Amy Irving in

"Rumpelstiltskin." Before that, he was on stage in "Romance Language" at Los Angeles' Mark Taper Forum.

"I just did a couple of other pictures," he said. "In 'Body Slam,' which Hal Needham directed, I played a wrestling promoter and announcer, a cute little cameo. In 'Tough Guys,' I was one of the crooks that Kirk Douglas and Burt Lancaster tried to recruit to pull off a job."

Barty has been a pro since age 3. Born in Millsboro, Pa., to full-grown parents, he toured in vaudeville with his two full-grown sisters and made his film debut in a two-reel comedy, "Wedded Blisters." He was busy in films during the 1930s, appearing in such musicals as "Golddiggers of 1933," "Footlight Parade," "Alice in Wonderland" and "Midsummer Night's Dream." His most memorable scene came in "Nothing Sacred," when he ran out and bit Fredric March on the leg.

"I also made 75 'Mickey McGuire' comedies," he said. "The star changed his name from Joe Yule Jr. to Mickey McGuire to Mickey Rooney. Mickey and Donald O'Connor and I have always kept in touch. We've known each other more

than 50 years."

Billy tried to break out of show business in the 1940s when he studied to become a sports announcer and journalist at Los Angeles City College. However, he was drawn into television, appearing on local shows and working as the host of his own children's program. From 1952-60, he toured as one of Spike Jones' zanies.

"My big breakthrough came with 'Day of the Locust,'" Barty said. "That changed the perspective producers had of me. I was thought of as an actor, not just a little person being cute with Spike Jones."

Talent has opened doors for Barty. However, the discrimination is still there.

"People do not understand the medical, psychological, vocational and social problems that can derive from being small," Barty said. "Because of that, little people are not considered a part of society."

"I tell others my size that we can prove ourselves in almost every profession. There is a solution to every problem."

"We can drive by using special extensions. We can do the same thing that a 6-foot person does to reach 10 feet — only we get bigger ladders."

1985